TRAVELLER

TERMINUS POINT

SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

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TERMINUS POINT

CREDITS

CLASSIC TRAVELLER
Marc Miller

Loren Wiseman, John Harshman, Frank Chadwick, Darryl Hany, Winston Hamilton, Tony Svajlenka, Scott Renner, Doug Poe, David MacDonald, Wayne Roth, Paul R. Banner, Jennell Jaquays.

MONGOOSE TRAVELLER

Author
Martin J. Dougherty

Editor
Matthew Sprange

Layout and Graphic Design
Sandrine Thirache

Cover Illustration
Tomislav Tikulin

Interior Illustrations
Sandrine Thirache, Maia Anderson, Cassie Gregory, Jon Torres, Quentin Soubrouillard, Ghislain Pariset

TRAVELLER INNER CIRCLE
Andrew James Alan Welty, Colin Dunn, M. J. Dougherty, Rob Eaglestone, Sam Wissa, Joshua Bell, Maksim Smelchak

Special Thanks
Marc Miller, Loren Wiseman

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T R A V E L L E R

INTRODUCTION

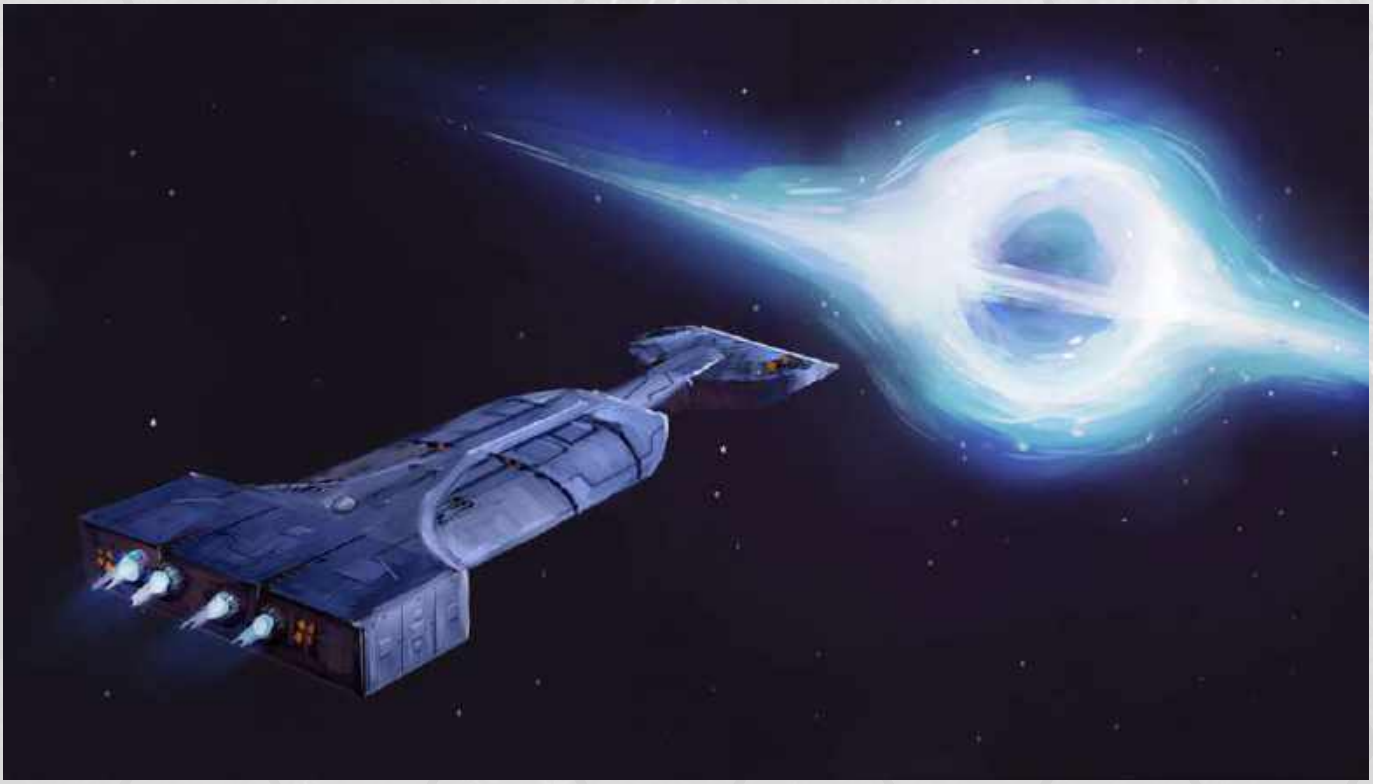
Terminus Point is the finale to the *Deepnight Revelation* campaign. The Travellers have voyaged to the edge of the Spiral Arm and explored the Voidshore region, finally finding a way to cross to Terminus Point in the mouth of the Great Rift. The story begins as the Travellers make this last great leap into the unknown.

Arriving at Terminus Point the Travellers find a strange and obviously artificial star system, which they explore. At its heart is a strange gravitational anomaly similar to a black hole but apparently composed of multiple singularities. It eventually becomes apparent that a Deepnight Entity inhabits this star system and that its behaviour is different to those previously encountered. The Travellers must overcome this foe to gain access to a device they require. Once this is secured the Travellers can enter the anomaly.

Inside, the Travellers find a paradise world inhabited by the regressed remnants of a once civilised race. They are willing servitors to a mature Deepnight Entity – the original one – and appear content. The entity itself seems benevolent and appears to have shut itself away from the universe in order to protect developing life. Eventually it becomes apparent that the entity's plans are quite different and the arrival of *Deepnight Revelation* has created new opportunities for it. The Travellers are offered the chance to become part of the entity and thus 'immortal'.

If they refuse, the entity will attempt to take control of *Deepnight Revelation* and begin spreading through the universe. Even if it cannot take the ship, it will come out of its self-imposed prison and begin spreading, perhaps eventually consuming all life in the galaxy. The Travellers may be able to stop it but at a great cost.

The key to utterly destroying the Deepnight Entity is to collapse its system of singularities but this will also obliterate *Deepnight Revelation*. There is a way to avoid this, by using the gravity-shielding device, that allowed entry to the entity's hiding-place, but it requires a risky jump as the singularities collapse. The Travellers will survive this but they make the mother of all misjumps…



THE COUNTERAGENT

By this point the Travellers have had opportunities to discover a counteragent that can partially or completely prevent infection and cure someone in the early stages. The agent can also inhibit the growth of the entity or poison it. If the Travellers have indicated an interest in such a compound and make efforts to develop one, they will have a significant advantage in this adventure.

It is possible the Travellers may have missed every opportunity or failed to see the significance of this compound but if they have made any efforts in this direction they will be in possession of an effective vaccine against the entity's attempts to infect them. The entity has no idea such a thing exists and will not discover it until it finally starts trying to infect crewmembers.

A generous Referee might choose to have the mission scientists present 'something they have been working on since Giikur' even if the Travellers themselves have been lax. How potent the counteragent is depends on how much effort the Travellers have put into developing it, so even a generous Referee should not give the Travellers the Stage 3 counteragent without them having done something to earn it.

Stage 0: The Travellers are aware a counteragent could be created but their work is in its early stages. No effective counteragent exists.
Stage 1: The Travellers have access to a basic counteragent that provides DM+2 on checks to avoid infection. A dose lasts for 2D hours, after which another must be taken to get a continued effect.

The Stage 1 counteragent can also be used in aerosol form to cleanse an area (such as a starship compartment) of the entity's spores.
Stage 2: The Travellers have access to a highly effective counteragent that provides DM+4 on checks to avoid infection and can reverse the early stages of infection. A dose is effective for 2D hours.
Stage 3: The Travellers have access to a powerful counteragent that entirely prevents infection. A dose lasts 2D hours but a Traveller who has taken regular doses or eaten small quantities in food for several weeks gains a permanent DM+2 to prevent infection.

The Stage 3 counteragent is almost totally effective. That is, Travellers who use it cannot be infected and most other people cannot either. However, there is always a small possibility that infection will occur anyway. This possibility can be used by the Referee at an opportune time.

The counteragent is mildly toxic to the people of Terminus, due to their origins. It may or may not prevent infection but will definitely make them ill.

Each time the Travellers encounter a manifestation of the Deepnight Entity they may make an attempt to develop or improve their counteragent. This requires a Long-Term, Very Difficult research project. Success indicates the Travellers have access to the next stage. So, if the Travellers begin work after the encounter in *Deepnight Legacy*, they can develop the Stage 0 counteragent from the data they have at that time. Subsequent encounters provide enough information to allow the formula to be enhanced.

MATTERS OF GRAVITY, SCIENCE AND FICTION

A science-fiction story must be grounded in real-world science. If not, the Travellers cannot make a logical extrapolation from known facts. It can be tempting to just make stuff up but without a cohesive setting the game can become a random torrent of ideas-of-the-week. Anything that does not comply with our current understanding of science needs an explanation or at least must follow coherent rules. The explanation can be blatant pseudo-science but it must be consistent. The Travellers may never find out why something happens but the Referee must know.

One factor the Referee must always keep in mind is that once a concept is introduced to the universe it continues to exist there. It is tempting to drop something amazing in front of the Travellers without giving it much thought but if planets suddenly stop in their orbits or spring into existence out of nowhere there must be a reason – and plausible results. For example, the Referee decides a magnetic field that blocks all weapons will be a useful plot device and uses it in an adventure. So far so good but the Travellers become interested in the concept and its underlying principles. They begin to worry that an alien race could have weaponised this technology and turn aside from their mission to investigate. They have no way of knowing this was a single-use throwaway concept.

On the other hand, science fiction *is* fiction and therefore at least partly made up. There must be out-of-the-ordinary elements to make the game something

other than a soap opera in space. The real-world science we know about provides plenty of wonder – black holes, nebulae, planets with highly unusual conditions, strange forms of life that actually exist in extreme places on Earth – without inventing anything new. There are elements in the *Deepnight Revelation* campaign that are beyond the science we know and the Referee can always add more but for the most part the Travellers should encounter things explainable by real-world science.

The Referee would do well to learn a little about space science. Concepts presented in the *Campaign Guide* and adventures are explained but having some background knowledge allows the Referee to drop in plausible but amazing concepts and to know where the boundaries are. An obvious example is a habitable world in the far outsystem. Simple common sense suggests that such a planet could not exist, as it does not receive enough energy from its star to keep from freezing. A handwave 'it was terraformed' may seem plausible to some but anyone who has survived the most fleeting encounter with science will wonder how… and there is still no explanation for the warm conditions on a world with no source of energy.

This approach has been taken throughout the *Deepnight Revelation* campaign. Most concepts used are extrapolated (or taken directly) from real-world science or else already present in *Traveller*. *Traveller* has always had psionics and although the abilities of the Deepnight Entity are beyond those explained in the *Traveller Core Rulebook* this seems reasonable given it is a super-mind with millions of years to practice. Traveller canon also includes the capability to create artificial gravity in a unidirectional field. This is the basis for the internal gravity provided by deck plates aboard starships.

The ability of the Deepnight Entity to create a shell of singularities by crushing planetoids, and using them to produce a gravitic hiding-place subject to extreme time dilation, is based on concepts already in the game and some real science, taken to an extreme for plot reasons. It is an example of the sort of major extrapolation that should only be done to facilitate a big story. A minor encounter on the way would not really justify stretching concepts so far – doing so on a regular basis weakens the fabric of the universe as it were and makes it hard for Travellers to comprehend what is possible and what is not.

In order to tell the story we wanted, we created an entity that could manipulate gravity with psionics and made some big assumptions about time dilation effects within the gravitic shell. This was necessary for the campaign but it does have implications. There is little need to worry about the Travellers developing gravity-manipulating psionic powers and going around crushing planets or dismantling stars. The ability to do this requires more power than a person could develop and millennia of practice. However, what about the gravitic anomaly? Does that distort the universe? The short answer is no.

The strength of the gravitational field at a singularity is unimaginably high and indeed our knowledge of physics breaks down at this point. However, gravitational forces obey an inverse square law, which means the force experienced diminishes at a rate equal to the square of the distance – moving twice as far away from the singularity reduces the force experienced by a factor of four. The singularities created by the Deepnight Entity are tiny, with a very small radius within which their gravitational forces are significant. Indeed, the anomaly as a whole exerts only a little more gravitational attraction than the main sequence star that contains most of the matter within it.

The anomaly is not detectable from Charted Space using gravitic sensors – no polity there has instruments sufficiently powerful to pick up a gravity field equivalent to that of a main-sequence star at such a great distance. However, the gravitational effects on photons passing it create a lensing effect that can be observed and which baffled Imperial scientists.

Light is affected by gravity. Normally the effect is minimal, so light passing a planet or even a star is not affected much. However, photons passing close to a black hole are deflected by the intense gravity field and some are captured. The gravitic anomaly created by the entity behaves like a black hole in some ways but not in others. Photons are normally deflected in a predictable manner but in this case they do not seem to be. This is of course due to the movement of singularities in the shell, creating regions of strong and weaker attraction, but the Travellers will not know that until they arrive.

If the Travellers want to study the anomaly en route using remote instruments, they will discover the same facts as other scientists. It bends light in a similar manner to a black hole, suggesting a singularity or other extremely high gravity phenomenon. Yet it does not do so predictably, which could mean it is not a single object but a system – perhaps multiple black holes orbiting one another. These are the best conclusions that can be gained by remote instruments using the effect on light photons to infer gravitational forces.

The gravitic analysis suite aboard *Deepnight Revelation* has a nominal detection distance of around 300 light years (roughly 100 parsecs) for a gravity source equivalent to a black hole or stellar object. The anomaly

can be detected beyond this distance with considerable difficulty, to a practical maximum of about 1,500 light years or 500 parsecs. Just detecting it at this distance would require strenuous effort by skilled scientists.

Starting at about 100 light years (roughly 30 parsecs) the gravitic analysis suite can begin to resolve the gravity field exerted by the anomaly. It still defies explanation; the radius of the field source is about 2.4AU, vastly larger than the radius of the largest known supermassive black holes. Those have a mass estimated in the millions of stellar masses but this object is only a little more massive than a typical main sequence star – indeed, its mass is too small to have formed a singularity. At the same time, photons passing its surface are affected as if they were close to a singularity although, as noted, this is unpredictable.

It is not until the Travellers enter the Terminus Point system that their instruments will be able to resolve the many singularities forming a shell around… something. This in turn raises new questions. Each new stage of information available has presented more questions than answers, and even close observation leaves the Travellers no wiser. The only way to find answers will be to enter the anomaly and investigate.

REFEREE'S OUTLINE

Terminus Point can play out in a variety of ways but there is an overall storyline that will be followed. First the Travellers cross from the Voidshore to Terminus Point and explore it. This leads to a confrontation with the entity on Kroylos and the discovery of the Droyne ship. The Travellers must then defeat the infected Leviathan and obtain the gravitic shielding device. Once this is done, it is possible to enter the gravitic shell.

Passage into the shell is difficult and dangerous, and should leave *Deepnight Revelation* in need of repairs. Whilst this is going on the Travellers land on Terminus and meet the population. There should be a period of learning about the world, during which the Travellers may become convinced the Deepnight Entity has matured into a benevolent being. However, it is hatching its own plans and will try to gain control of their ship one way or another. When the Deepnight Entity realises it must fight for its survival or if it exhausts other options, it will turn the entire population of Terminus against the Travellers.

Ultimately the Travellers find they are trapped inside the gravitic shell with the entity and it wields the resources of an entire planet. They must find a way to destroy it or at least escape, for the entity is relentless and overwhelmingly powerful.

DESIGNER'S NOTES

The fundamental concept of the *Deepnight Revelation* campaign is that the Travellers 'must have agency', in the words of Matthew Sprange. Martin Dougherty would phrase it as 'they are the captains of their own fate', which is a more flowery way of saying the same thing.

It is not possible to write a tightly scripted adventure on this scale without railroading the Travellers, which would be a denial of the above principles. Rather than telling you a story in the style of 'the Travellers must do this thing, then go to this place', we have given you the framework of an epic tale and the ability to make it uniquely yours.

The *Deepnight Revelation* campaign was designed to accommodate any Traveller, in any role aboard a ship with a crew of 500. How a security specialist will experience the events of the campaign will be quite different to the way the mission commander does and what of a telepathic Zhodani liaison officer or spaceport drifter brought along to provide 'unconventional' skills? The many roles the Travellers could play mean that they could be at the sharp end of an incident or trying to control it from afar. It is not possible to closely script a storyline in such an open environment… and indeed not desirable.

The framework of events presented here are things that will happen. How your Travellers react to them will determine the storyline. One group may play the Terminus situation as grunts on the ground, another as command officers. Their stories will be different, although there will of course be common elements. In short, we are not trying to tell you a story in these pages… we are giving you the opportunity to create one of your own.

Let us not forget that sometimes a captain goes down with the ship. The Travellers have agency but that is a two-edged sword. If they fail to plan or make bad decisions they will suffer the consequences… as is only right and proper. It may be that the finale of your campaign features the tragic deaths of the Travellers on Terminus, fighting and failing to protect the population from the roused entity. Others may meet their end in heroic sacrifice, smashing their ship into the Deepnight Entity's lair to eradicate it from the universe. These are fine and brave endings, and more importantly, they are the endings your Travellers may determine by their own actions.

Of course, it is actually possible to defeat the entity and survive, continuing the voyage of *Deepnight Revelation* after escape from Terminus Point. The original, classic *Traveller* adventures often included the phrase 'subsequent events are at the discretion of the Referee', but it might be better to say:

'All events are at the discretion of the Referee and the Travellers.'

Your *Deepnight Revelation* campaign will be unique and what makes it unique are the choices made by the Travellers. We have given them complete freedom to make those choices, the rules are there to adjudicate them and the Referee's task is to provide plausible outcomes and consequences. We have enjoyed creating this campaign but it is yours now. It is not our place to tell you how every detail must be positioned, nor provide every nuance of the storyline. That is a task for the Travellers.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DEEPNIGHT ENTITY

The Deepnight Entity is, in many ways, the personification and perfection of life. In its simple forms it exists to feed and grow, and is extremely effective at both. As it develops it becomes more complex without changing its nature, developing additional capabilities that ultimately lead to sentience and enormous psionic potential. Yet the entity is not vulnerable in the way that complex creatures normally are. Reduced only to a few cells it can still return to its mature form – eventually – and redevelop. More specialised creatures die when injured to a far lesser degree. Constant replenishment of its simple structures renders the creature effectively immortal.

The price for this capability is that a mature entity is too big to move and inefficient in many ways. This in turn requires more biological matter as food than a more specialised creature would need; matter that has to be brought by servitors or obtained from the servitors themselves. A mature entity has to assume the role of a static godlike being, sending either directly controlled servitors or willing minions to obtain food for it. There are, however, other possibilities. An entity based aboard a starship could go where it pleased and one that infected biological starfarers like a Leviathan might be even more mobile.

ORIGINS

The Milky Way galaxy formed around 13–14 billion years ago, beginning with small globular clusters of stars. Generations of early stars burned their fuel and died, with newer stars containing heavier elements. It was billions of years before conditions were suitable for life to emerge and even then the earliest life forms faced a difficult struggle.

Life took hold on a few worlds and at some point in the very distant past a particularly tenacious bundle of cells developed the ability to absorb other cells that were not like its own and convert them. It grew, becoming more complex and gradually took over its world. The creature's hunger was insatiable and survival became a constant battle to bring sufficient biological matter to the entity's clusters. Dispersing itself in several masses scattered over multiple continents was still not sufficient and eventually the entity reached a state of limited equilibrium. It could sustain itself by ravaging the resources of its homeworld but the limited life there could not support the entity in the longer term. Eventually it would deplete the available resources and begin to starve.

This original entity was not fully mature but it was large, with multiple centres of consciousness. Together they formed a mighty mind that set itself a single problem – how to survive. The entity was aware of its potential if it could grow large enough but faced rapid extinction if it permitted itself to do so and a slower one if it did not. Should the Deepnight Entity allow itself to grow into a god, consuming the resources of a planet for a few short years of full capability, or should it accept centuries of mediocre existence in its present form? It chose neither.

The entity was immobile but its thoughts could range across nearby space using a form of clairvoyance. This produced only vague, tantalising glimpses of nearby star systems and the wider universe. From this patchy data the entity developed an understanding of the universe and produced a hypothesis. The galaxy was young then and few worlds had life. Yet conditions were changing and in time more worlds suitable for life would be available. If the entity could survive long enough, it might be able to spread to multiple worlds and feed off the organic material produced there.

The time frame was billions of years, potentially longer than the planet the entity inhabited could be expected to survive, even if it did not extinguish all life there. Perhaps it could hop from one world to another? The entity thought and planned for years, extrapolating from data it had to find one workable solution. It would build itself a place to wait and bend time itself to reach the lush future it dreamed of.

The survival of the entity was ultimately a physics problem rather than a biological one. Its plan made, the entity embarked upon it with cold ruthlessness. First it set its minions to gather food, planting new clusters of its tissues across the surface of the world and consuming all life there. It grew, reaching its maximum capability just as the world around it died. Capability was sustained for long enough by consuming itself, accepting the erosion of its powers and intellect as the price for temporary survival.

This was the only time the entity has known fear, as it consumed its own flesh on the dead wreck of a world.

It sent telekinetic shockwaves through the planet, tearing free sections of its crust and forcing them into new alignment. It reached out and nudged planets in their orbits; it even modified its star. Its last conscious act was to alter a few protein interactions in its own cells.

The entity felt its intellect dim from a bright, godlike clarity to the fuzzy instinct of an immature cluster. Most of its mass was no longer part of it; it was the seed of a new generation of life on the planet. The world itself was becoming warmer, wetter and almost perfect for the development of complex life. It would be millions of years before the planet fully settled into its new orbit; millions more before complex life emerged and still longer before the world could support a conscious entity.

The remaining cluster died as the world was wracked by storms and earthquakes caused by the entity's manipulation of its stellar system. A few cells clung to bare rock here and there, bearing the seeds of survival, and in time life did indeed emerge on the planet. It came forth as primitive mats of cyanobacteria, developing in complexity as the eons passed. This was sufficient to sustain the surviving cells of the entity but not enough to allow them to spread This suited the long-term plan; it needed a vibrant world teeming with life to sustain itself.

In time that world came to be and small clusters grew where they encountered sufficient food. The entity lived anew but was scattered and primitive, operating on instinct alone. This was sufficient; the entity grew and fed, so some clusters thrived. As they expanded they became aware of one another, at least on an instinctive level, and began to cooperate. Infected creatures were sent to create secondary clusters, creating pathways or taking control of rich sources of food.

When a cluster finally achieved sentience, it considered its position. Life was burgeoning on its homeworld but insufficient to allow growth to full potential. Without hesitation, the entity dismembered itself. Again and again a cluster reached sentience over the millennia, only to deem conditions insufficiently promising and surrender its identity once more. Finally, after millions or perhaps billions of years, a sentient cluster judged prospects for sustained full potential to be acceptable.

The first cluster allowed others to develop and join its consciousness, creating a dispersed entity with a powerful single mind linked by telepathy. As its powers grew it turned its attention to sustainability, modifying weather patterns to improve conditions still further. The entity tamed its world, choking off volcanoes and relieving stresses on fault lines. It reversed an incipient ice age. Eventually, it began to experiment with gravity.

The entity did not remember its original incarnation, nor its brief flares of sentience in eons since, but it knew what it had done. As it learned about the cosmos, it saw discrepancies that could only be explained by the actions of some powerful psionic being. For a time it wondered if it might have a rival but eventually concluded it had done what was necessary to reach this point. It was not grateful to its former self for the sacrifice, for it knew nothing of such emotions. It was alive and had therefore achieved the goal set so long ago.

Now came the second, and even greater, part of its task. The entity had created a world that could support it in a mature state for an almost indefinite period but to achieve its ultimate aim it had to survive until the whole galaxy contained enough life to feed it. Then it could spread to many worlds and ensure survival even if disaster struck its current home.

The obvious solution was to wait but too much might go wrong in the meantime. An asteroid impact or nearby supernova could destroy its habitat. There was also its hunger to consider. In order to avoid overstraining its ecosystem the entity had to deny itself on a constant basis, limiting food intake despite an overwhelming compulsion to feed and grow into its full form.

The entity was forced to choose between the torture of denying its nature – thus remaining in a sustainable state, forever consumed by a desire to feed on everything around it – and a brief period in which it achieved full potential before the ecosystem collapsed. It chose sustained life over greatness and embarked upon a plan to shorten the wait until the galaxy was ripe for it.

The entity built itself a tiny singularity, then another, then more. It maintained the singularities and held them apart with psionic mastery until it had created a gravitic shell around its home. The singularities were each used as an anchor point, with their gravitational forces intensified and focussed by the entity. This is still ongoing but the effect has been greatly reduced since the initial implementation of the shell.

Within this shell the passage of time was distorted by gravitational effects; every year inside was equivalent to thousands or millions outside. The strain of maintaining the gravitic shell was too much to bear after a time, so it was allowed to run down. This process is currently well advanced but not completed; for now the entity remains within its self-imposed prison with no idea of what is happening outside.

The entity's home star system was a binary. It had sealed off the system's primary, causing utter chaos among the world's orbiting the distant companion. These eventually settled into new orbits and life emerged. The companion

system is doomed when the gravitic shield breaks down; the companion star has settled into a distant orbit around the gravitic anomaly the entity created, as the singularities break down its attraction decreases. Already the companion, with its planets in orbit around it, is spiralling outward. Once enough singularities break down it will be freed to become a rogue star. Its planets may survive but the perturbation of their orbits will alter conditions drastically.

The entity made a reasonable prediction of how time dilation would affect the passage of perceived time outside and what the galaxy might be like when the shell finally opened. It made an initial attempt to send some of its matter outside the shell but whilst it knew the asteroids used to carry its material should have survived the transit, communication was not possible. So it waits for the artificial singularities to decay. They do so one-by-one, reducing the dilation effect and weakening the shell to the point where it will collapse and the Deepnight Entity can gaze upon the universe.

The Deepnight Entity's attempt to launch fragments of its tissue through the gravitational shell took place millions of years ago. Most asteroids survived the passage, although a high proportion were then captured by the companion star's gravity and burned up in its photosphere. Some fell on the life-bearing world and infected it, so others began drifting through the cosmos. It is likely that manifestations of the Deepnight Entity encountered by the Travellers resulted from this seeding process.

The life-bearing world in the companion system developed a major entity similar to the one within the gravitic anomaly. If the two were able to communicate they might coalesce into a single consciousness or they might remain separate beings. Even the Deepnight Entity itself does not know what would happen, although the way it absorbed other clusters suggests the greater mind would take control of the lesser being's clusters and servitors. The question is academic at present since the gravitic shell is still intact.

The entity on the companion world faces the same threats and challenges as the original. One world is not enough to feed it and it has already passed the point of no return. The planetary ecosystem is collapsing and the entity faces slow death by regression to its more basic forms. The arrival of the ancient Droyne expedition 300,000 years ago gave it hope that it might escape and more recently a Leviathan entered the system. This secondary entity is seeking a way to survive but lacks the resources of the original. It is doomed unless the Travellers intervene and they are unlikely to help it voluntarily.

The contrast between the two entities is an important part of the *Deepnight Revelation* story. The outside entity is limited in many ways and desperate to find a way to survive in the long term. The one inside the gravitic shell has already found a way and is watching its plan come to fruition. More importantly, the outer entity is far less intelligent and acts directly on instinct whereas the more mature one is capable of suppressing desires in order to deceive the Travellers.

Both entities want the Travellers as food or servitors, the same way they want every other living thing. Nothing can change this instinctive craving to absorb or control. Both also want *Deepnight Revelation,* since the ship represents a way to reach and infect more worlds. For the outer entity the desire is straightforward and could be described as hunger, however whilst the mature version feels the same craving its desire is tempered with intellect. Where the immature entity *wants* the ship, the mature one can think of many ways it could use *Deepnight Revelation* and is capable of weighing the benefits of each against the risks of failure.

What is not subject to any change is the ultimate goal of the Deepnight Entity. It exists only to spread and feed. It must reach other planets and infect them; it must ensure its survival. Nothing can deflect it from that goal and if it is not destroyed it will eventually find a way to spread across the galaxy.

THE TRAVELLERS

The Deepnight Entity is not expecting visitors from outside the gravitic shell. It is aware of the possibility that intelligent, starfaring life may have developed in the galaxy but the chances of someone finding a way to get through the shell are infinitesimally small – or so the entity judged. On the other hand, the arrival of a starship tells it what it wants to know – there is life out there and a means to move across the cosmos relatively quickly.

The entity is a vast, cold intellect but has limited information to work with. It is capable of thinking through possibilities and coming up with a working hypothesis but some lines of thought will not be pursued because it does not have the data to create a starting point. In some ways its thinking is like that of a genius who has no sense of touch and has never met anyone who has. This genius would not be able to predict someone sorting objects by feel or using their sense of touch to navigate a dark room. Once the baseline information that a sense of touch can exist became available the genius would be able to extrapolate many possibilities, although they would not know what was and what was not possible.

The entity has thought for millennia about what might exist outside its self-imposed prison and extrapolated ideas from limited data. It has no way of knowing what happened to the asteroids it fired off into space and does not know it managed to seed a world in the companion system with an entity like itself. The arrival of *Deepnight Revelation* will get the entity's full attention but it is used to thinking in terms of millennia, not minutes, and will withhold action until it has more information.

Note that the entity cannot read the minds of the people. It will not be instantly alerted if the Travellers ask about it or want to be shown what happens to herds when they wander into one of the discoloured areas. The people are for the most part beneath its notice but it will become aware of anyone coming close to one of its clusters; the people do this on a regular basis, so the entity will not be unduly alarmed unless the Travellers cause it harm. It will be intrigued more than anything else at the Travellers' interest and use every opportunity to gain information.

The entity will be aware if there is anyone aboard *Deepnight Revelation* who is infected with its tissues. It will need time to develop a telepathic link with the individual but both person and entity will be immediately aware of 'a presence'. Again, this will intrigue the entity and cause it to proceed even more cautiously.

Attacking a cluster or causing other minor harm to the entity will not enrage it. A less developed version would lash out in blind self-defence but the Deepnight Entity is capable of complete self-control. Parts are expendable so long as the whole survives and retains its capabilities and gaining control of a starship is such a valuable prize the entity will make almost any sacrifice.

The entity will observe at first, whilst trying to create a telepathic bond with anyone infected. It will also try to control the crew of *Deepnight Revelation* the way it controls the people of Terminus; by telepathic suggestion. This will completely fail, to the entity's puzzlement and concern. It will begin to study the crew to try to understand why and will eventually be able to send impulses to some crewmembers. Given sufficient time and contact with enough minds it will learn to use its telepathic powers more effectively but it has been isolated with only the people of Terminus and its own clusters to experiment on and has developed limitations despite enormous potential.

The Deepnight Entity will reveal itself to the Travellers after a time, possibly communicating through some of the people of Terminus or attempting to contact infectees through telepathy. It does not know how to convey thoughts to a trivial mind like that of a human, so what it sends will tend to be a painfully overwhelming jumble of images and emotion.

Unless the Travellers immediately unleash a devastating strike on one of its main clusters – and perhaps even then – the entity will try to present itself as an enlightened and benevolent being. It is capable of manipulating light to create images (and illusions) that could be used to trick attackers but initially will be used to convey information.

The Deepnight Entity can show the Travellers wonders. It will relate its history through physical or mental images, which may be interpreted as memories. They are not, for the most part; they are a presentation of what the entity thinks must have happened.

THE ENTITY AND TECHNOLOGY

The Deepnight Entity has never seen technology above TL5. It can infer the function of many devices from the way people hold and use them but will not understand their specifics at first; the entity can recognise the device in a Traveller's hand as a weapon of some kind but does not know about the safety catch or power feed. It can learn by observation of course, using its clairvoyance ability to spy on the Travellers. However, its interest would have to be piqued in some fashion before it made a study of the Travellers' technology. There is a lot going on and the entity sees everything as a vast blur of information. If it does not realise the significance of something it may well be overlooked.

The entity is not surprised by vehicles and spacecraft, so can figure out their general function with ease. It cannot fail to notice the nuclear fusion power plants aboard *Deepnight Revelation* and is already familiar with the processes they use – in general terms at least – as a result of its experiments with its star. It may not realise the significance of a nuclear demolition charge however, unless the Travellers give it clues by the way they act. If they treat the device like a weapon the entity will realise that it is one and wonder how powerful it might be. It will eventually figure out the potential of an uncontrolled nuclear reaction and take steps to protect itself but Travellers who casually plonk one down amid a collection of other equipment near a cluster will be able to use it without interference. Once.

THE ENTITY'S STORY

If it gets the chance, the entity will show the Travellers the formation of the universe, as best it has been able to figure out what happened. This is an impressive piece of theoretical science and a very good representation of the Big Bang and subsequent expansion of the universe. It shows the Travellers the first stars forming, perhaps giving the impression it actually saw them, and the eventual formation of the Milky Way galaxy.

The entity shows the Travellers primitive life emerging on a planet a few billion years after the Big Bang and the arise of an entity like itself. It will convey to them the hunger of this creature and the realisation that if it followed its nature it would spread through the galaxy and consume every living thing before dying. It thus chose to seal itself away from the universe. This is nothing but fact, however it is also misleading.

The entity can (and will) show the Travellers how the current rampant ecosystem arose on Terminus, how it protects the intelligent people of the world and ensures they thrive, and how it feeds in a controlled manner. It also tries to convey questions – what is the universe like outside, are there many starfarers and so forth. It will enlist the help of infectees it can communicate with or spokesmen from among the people if it needs to. It will try to convey an offer to the Travellers – become part of it and live forever as an all-powerful god-thing.

The entity is, of course, not telling the whole story. It wants the Travellers to see its restraint and the way it has chosen not to infect everything around it, although it does not want them to realise its purpose. If the Travellers can be made to believe the entity sealed itself away to protect the rest of the universe and eventually learned to control its impulses, they can perhaps be won over to its plan. They might even volunteer to allow it aboard *Deepnight Revelation.*

Of course, the entity is motivated only by self-interest. It was not protecting living things of the galaxy from its hunger; it was waiting until they were numerous enough to satisfy it. It does not explain the gravitic shell or time dilation effects and apparently does not understand questions about these matters. Nor does it explain how some of its material came to be outside the shell, other than a vague image of planetoids being blasted out into space whilst the entity experimented with its powers.

The entity realises it has a chance to make allies of the Travellers. It may even make them feel bad about damage they have done if they attacked a cluster. There is a lot of evidence to support the image it is trying to project – the people of Terminus are uninfected and happy in their existence; the entity lives in harmony with its ecosystem in a way that more primitive versions cannot. Could it be that it has matured into a benevolent god? It wants the Travellers to think so but of course nothing has really changed. It is still bent on consuming all life to feed its own existence. If it cannot win the Travellers over, it will move against them directly.

THE DEEPNIGHT ENTITY'S CAPABILITIES

The entity is dispersed between dozens of major clusters and hundreds of smaller ones. All are connected by telepathy and there are physical links as well. The entity has had millennia to push root-like structures deep into the soil of Terminus. These collect nutrients from the soil as well as allowing remote clusters to feed on behalf of others. When a herd is directed into a cluster or a huge shoal of fish is consumed by one located on the seabed, the entity as a whole feeds. This is not enough to satisfy its eternal hunger but it is able to keep its instinct more or less in check and thereby avoids depopulating a whole region. Were it to do so, it would take many years for the ecosphere to re-establish itself, reducing the overall food supply and potentially causing a downward spiral. The entity knows this but the craving is overwhelming.

This is the reason for the sickly-vegetation and barren sites the Travellers will find. Sometimes a cluster draws too much from the surrounding area and plant life begins to die. The entity must then force itself to stop feeding from that cluster whilst the balance reasserts itself. Times when it has failed to do so have left barren areas, which in some cases have resulted in the local cluster being deliberately cut off and left to die. By sacrificing a part of itself the entity allows its food source to regenerate.

There is a primary cluster on Terminus, which is much larger than most others, and multiple secondary clusters in remote locations. Destroying the primary and secondary clusters will greatly weaken and diminish the entity but it can return to its full capabilities over time unless completely destroyed. That poses a challenge.

The primary, or great, cluster is located at the world's only large city, concealed by a gigantic pyramidal structure, with roots and cables running deep underground inland, and out to sea. The great cluster has 10,000 hits and regenerates at a rate of 100D hits per round. It could be destroyed by a nuclear demolition charge if the device were detonated inside the pyramid but might partially survive if the weapon went off in the city instead. Bombardment with a planetoid from orbit would obliterate the whole area – but there are no suitable planetoids within the gravitic shell. *Deepnight Revelation's* particle accelerator would suffer too much attenuation in the atmosphere to be effective against a ground target.

The counteragent discovered in *Deepnight Legacy* is effective against the entity but there is no way to create or deliver enough of it to poison the great cluster. A secondary cluster might be crippled for a time but the entity is smart enough to realise what is happening and take steps to prevent introduction of further doses. Clever Travellers might deliver a large dose in the form of poisoned food but this is a one-off method that will not work a second time.

Even if the great cluster were destroyed, the Deepnight Entity would still be able to function. Each of its secondary clusters has around 5,000 hits – the equivalent of a normal mature entity in their own right – and regenerates 50D hits per round. These secondary sites could be attacked with nuclear weapons or some other means of delivering enormous damage but there are several of them and no guarantee the Travellers will find them all.

The entity is smart enough to write off an unsuccessful attack on one of its clusters if it thinks the Travellers can be won over but if they demonstrate the capability or potential to destroy a secondary or great cluster the entity will turn its full attention to destroying them.

The entity can be considered to have PSI 100, an effectively unlimited amount for the purposes of using and maintaining its powers, although a large expenditure will require it to break down its own cells to fuel its life processes. That in turn will result in an increased requirement to feed. Travellers monitoring an orbital reconnaissance feed may see vegetation wither before their eyes or a herd of creatures start charging straight towards a cluster location.

The entity has unique versions of the Telepathy, Clairvoyance and Telekinesis talents as well as some unusual abilities. However, its mind is so alien that it does not follow the usual rules for psionics. The Referee should also note that due to the entity's unique situation it cannot do some things a normal telepath would be able to. For example, it cannot assault another mind and – initially at least – could not make sense of the thoughts of a human. It may learn through prolonged interaction but the Travellers will more than likely be directly opposing the entity by that point.

Telepathy is limited to direct communication with other clusters over planetary distances and communication of images or suggestions. The entity may be able to reach a lot further but until the Travellers arrive it was not aware there were other minds to search for. It had become used to thinking of the one star and one planet inside the shell as the whole of the universe.

Learning to reach further will take a long time – months or years. The gravitic shell blocks the entity's telepathic abilities but once it collapses the entity on Terminus will be able to contact the immature entity in the companion

system if it survived. It will eventually learn to transmit suggestions to starfarers over greater distances and might ultimately gain the ability to summon starfarers or a Leviathan to it over a distance of many parsecs. If this occurs, the entity will certainly spread across the galaxy.

Transmission of suggestion is at present limited to the people of Terminus and infectees, however as the entity studies the crew of *Deepnight Revelation* it will learn how to influence them. This will be minor at first but the entity may eventually be able to direct some crewmembers. There is a side effect of this process; those who are telepathically receptive (either they have the Telepathy talent or are sensitive to the carvings discovered in *Deepnight Legacy*) will be aware of stray thoughts emanating from the entity. It will eventually learn not to broadcast its thinking but among the headache-inducing blasts of stray thought are images that will allow a sensitive to figure out some of what the entity is up to.

The entity has never discovered other aspects of the Telepathy talent and cannot make an assault on another mind. Any attempt to attack it by this means will reveal it can be done and it will begin trying to figure out how to do so itself. Instances of people suddenly dropping dead or experiencing overwhelming mental debilitation might be a clue to this happening and sensitives will be able to predict when the entity will be able to assault the minds of the crew. That day is just a few weeks or months away.

Clairvoyance is more general and follows the rules in the *Traveller Core Rulebook* more closely. However, the entity cannot shut down its clairsentience, which operates constantly over the whole planet. The result is a barrage of information, requiring the entity to search for what is important amongst the noise. It is constantly aware of stresses in the planet's tectonic plates, the movement of fish shoals in the deep ocean, and life processes of so many living things. Given its hunger this is torture.

The entity's clairvoyance ability is disrupted by strains on the fabric of space/time. The gravitic shell forms an effective barrier, preventing it from seeing what is outside and powerful electromagnetic emissions also swamp it. The ship's power plants are sufficiently powerful to do this – a conference held in a plant chamber could not be spied upon by this method. The Travellers may become aware of this if the entity shows them their ship for some reason. There are blanks near power plants and other sources of strong emissions such as the main sensor array if it is active. Charging the spinal weapon's capacitors would create another dead zone.

Telekinesis is quite specialised. The entity has used this power on inanimate objects in a brute force manner, shoving planetoids into new orbits or crushing their matter into an infinitely small space to create a tiny singularity. It might use telekinesis to fight directly against Travellers if it has to but this concept does not come naturally to it. The entity is more likely to topple walls or crack open the ground than hurl an object at someone.

The entity's Telekinesis talent is mainly directed at gravity control. It constantly keeps the shell of singularities in balance and during the period of time dilation was strained to the limit by both creating the huge gravity field required and protecting the star and planet from its effects. The entity might use gravitic effects against the Travellers but this is more likely to be an increase or decrease in the local gravity field than deliberately bouncing someone off the ceiling.

Some of the entity's other abilities may be partially or wholly psionic. Its regeneration ability is a life process but can be controlled to the point where the entity can rapidly grow new cells in one cluster, fuelled by the breakdown of another. This might be considered a psionic ability or simply mastery over its own structure. Ultimately, it matters little; the unique nature of the Deepnight Entity means that others will not be able to precisely replicate its talents. This means that what is important is what it can do, not how.

STATE OF HOSTILITY

The entity's state of hostility depends on the actions of the Travellers. Of course, it could be said to be completely hostile to the Travellers from the outset – it wants to eat them and everything else. However, the hostility state is a guideline for how it will act and whether it places long-term possibilities ahead immediate destruction, serving the Referee as a guide to how the entity acts. When the Travellers first arrive it is in a Passive state.

The entity's progress through states of hostility depends on the actions of the Travellers to a great extent. Their mere presence will cause a drift towards a Manipulative state but the entity is unlikely to escalate beyond this point without good reason. It has time on its side and can afford to wait for opportunities or gather more information.

In any state lower than Defensive the entity will tolerate Travellers and crewmembers in the vicinity of or even approaching its clusters so long as they do no harm. Once this state is reached the entity will drive away or if necessary kill anyone coming close but any decision to escalate will be based upon demonstrated (or strongly suspected) ability and desire to damage a cluster.

The entity will not escalate if all the Travellers do is defend themselves; if it sends servitors to drive them away from a cluster and the Travellers destroy them, the entity will accept this providing the Travellers do not then attack the cluster. A stray shot here and there is of no consequence but significant harm to a cluster will be taken as evidence of hostile intentions towards the entity as a whole.

Escalation is likely to be slow unless the Travellers move aggressively against the entity but if they do it can be rapid if necessary. The entity does not want to fight or destroy the Travellers and will increase in hostility only in response to threats or if it is obvious it cannot get what it wants by current means. A degree of de-escalation is also possible but the entity is highly unlikely to drop below a Defensive state and once the entity becomes Defensive escalation is all but inevitable. A change in state might be triggered by the Travellers or exhaustion of options at the current level. Escalation can also be used by the Referee for plot reasons; if the Travellers are not making progress the Referee might have the entity move to a Coercive state and start killing people to make its point. This should spur the Travellers to greater efforts.

The Travellers may realise it is in their interests to prevent escalation, playing a careful game until ready to act. The Referee might choose to give them a hint from one of the research staff if they are intent on doing something that will cause a showdown before they are ready. For example, deploying a nuclear demolition charge to destroy a secondary cluster or even the great

State of Hostility

State	Notes
Passive	The entity does not react overtly to the arrival of the Travellers. At first this is because it is unaware of them but even when it realises starfarers are on its world it will choose to observe and await developments.
Curious	Once the entity becomes Curious it will begin actively trying to obtain information. That may take the form of causing gravitic phenomena to see if the Travellers can detect them, prompting local people or creatures to take certain actions to see how the Travellers react or simply observing them closely to learn as much as possible. It will try to extract information from the Travellers about the wider universe, which might mean allowing them to approach one of its clusters and communicating as directly as possible.
Manipulative	Once the entity becomes aware that there is a great deal of life in the universe, it will begin actively trying to recruit the Travellers as willing agents. It offers them benefits intended to appeal to self-interest – which is all it knows – including longevity and large amounts of physical objects if the Travellers seem to value them. Once it learns more the entity may try subtle manipulations based on a deeper understanding of the Travellers' motivations. For example, it will not at first realise anyone might care about being able to witness the birth of a star but once it is aware that mission scientists find this attractive it will begin offering to show them the wonders of the universe or solutions to problems like disease, earthquakes and famine.
Defensive	The entity is not concerned the Travellers might want to destroy it, since it cannot imagine how they would be able to do so. If it becomes aware they have the means and might choose to do so, or if they make a significant attack on one of its main clusters, it becomes Defensive. At this point the entity will not allow Travellers anywhere near its clusters and may attack if they try to approach. It will not actively pursue or try to destroy them, however.
Coercive	If the entity becomes certain it cannot get what it wants from the Travellers by manipulation or bargaining, it will become Coercive. It is quite willing to destroy a village of innocent people to make its point. However, attacks will be intended to frighten the Travellers into obeying rather than completely eliminate the crew of *Deepnight Revelation*.
Aggressive	If the entity is concerned the Travellers have the means and desire to destroy some of its main clusters it will actively attack them. This will take the form of relatively small-scale actions such as making local people turn hostile towards the Travellers or using a precise power to attack a vehicle or small craft.
Murderous	If the entity thinks it is fighting for its survival it will turn every resource at its disposal against the Travellers. The entire planetary population will be made hostile along with much of the wildlife. Servitors will be sent against the Travellers at every chance and other powers will be used to attack vehicles, craft and even *Deepnight Revelation* herself.

one will instantly turn the entity Murderous. Defeating it will be a great deal harder if this state is triggered before the Travellers have their plans in place.

Defending Key Points

The entity will always defend key locations like its clusters, using whatever means are available. When in a lower state of hostility – Defensive and below – it will prefer to infect local people and send them against intruders rather than directing them without infection, as this will conceal its ability to do so and perhaps leave options open.

The entity has at its disposal the usual abilities of a cluster – tendrils, creepers and clouds – along with a number of infected people to use as mobile guards. These are taken from among the population at intervals so there are always at least a few available but kept out of sight until the entity needs them. It should be noted that the local population will actively – and voluntarily – defend nearby clusters if they realise the Travellers intend attacking. This defence could be active, in the form of war-parties attacking the Travellers but may be more subtle. The local population will argue against the attack, steal and hide weapons, destroy supplies and create obstacles by barricading roads or destroying bridges. The Travellers might find their passive resistance infuriating if they do not want to fire on their new friends but the locals insist on interfering with the Travellers' attempts to liberate them.

In addition to these mundane methods, the entity can use psionic powers to defend its clusters. It prefers not to do so, in part to conceal its true capabilities. However, it will not hesitate to use its powers to defend a main cluster. Lesser ones may be sacrificed if this suits the entity's long-term plans.

THE ENTITY'S POWERS

As noted earlier, the entity does not know it can make a telepathic assault on another mind. If assaulted by a telepath it is only a matter of time before it comes to this realisation. There is little the Travellers can do once the entity gains the necessary control to target such strikes; its mind is so powerful it can overcome any ordinary telepath's shield and obliterate them. This situation is the endgame for the entity; the Travellers can survive only by remaining in areas shielded against telepathy or wearing artificial telepathic shields.

Developing the assault ability will take time. First the entity must realise it is possible, then develop the skill by assaulting random people all over the planet. The time frame on this is days to weeks and once the capability is developed the entity will begin killing the crew a few at a time in the hope of coercing survivors. Eventually, it will kill everyone and begin trying to figure out how to seize *Deepnight Revelation* by other means.

If the entity is not assaulted it may still realise it has the capability for a telepathic assault as it interacts with the Travellers, although this will take much longer. Either way, the clock is ticking. The Referee should warn the Travellers about their potential doom by way of the mission's science staff – assuming the Travellers do not figure it out for themselves. The threat of the entity becoming able to simply wipe out anyone who does not do its bidding can be used as a 'clock' for the adventure, spurring the Travellers to urgent efforts when they might be more inclined to dawdle.

The entity's other powers will grow and adapt over time. The rate at which this happens depends on the needs of the storyline. If the Travellers are having it easy the Referee should implement the next power. Ideally, the Travellers will see a pattern of escalation as the entity learns more about them and realises how much of a threat they are.

The entity can use one ability per combat round unless otherwise noted, with a more or less infinite reserve of PSI.

0: TELEKINETIC SLAP

Telekinetic slap is a level 0 ability; that is, the entity can already perform it when the Travellers arrive. It is a clumsy and not especially forceful blow that can be delivered horizontally, vertically or anywhere in between. A telekinetic slap will hurt but not harm people in its 3 metre radius. It will also scatter objects, knock equipment over and may cause Travellers to stumble in the direction of a natural hazard. An Average (8+) DEX check is necessary to avoid being knocked in the direction the entity wants.

A telekinetic slap can be used to make a lot of noise and might be employed creatively by the entity. It might cause large splashes in a body of water to attract the Travellers' attention or swat a collection of loose objects to fling them at someone. This will not cause a lot of damage but will be distracting. The maximum damage that can be dealt by secondary projectiles is 1D. Anyone targeted can make an Average (8+) DEX check to avoid damage.

0: TELEKINETIC SHOVE

Telekinetic shove is another level 0 ability. It is a steady but not precise push that can send someone off balance or disrupt equipment. Against a person, the push is treated as a STR 7 individual. It is more effective against vehicles and other large objects, and can rock a vehicle like an ATV alarmingly. This may make driving more difficult but cannot damage any but the flimsiest of vehicles.

1: TELEPATHIC DISORIENTATION

The first ability the entity develops for use against the newcomers is accidental. Its attempts to make telepathic contact result in confusion, disorientation and a sense of unease, and it soon learns to impose this deliberately. Anyone targeted by this attack is affected for 1D rounds unless they have psionic shielding in place. The effect is residual; the entity can use other talents whilst the Traveller is disorientated.

Those affected may stumble or fall, press the wrong buttons or fail to act when they need to. A Traveller must pass a Difficult (10+) INT check in any round they wish to act. Failure indicates they can do nothing useful or coherent. At first this talent will be used in an unimaginative manner but once the entity starts to understand the Travellers' technology it can get secondary effects. For example, a pinnace pilot may be attacked just as he is making his final docking approach, or a Traveller might be affected just at the critical point of a rousing speech.

2: TELEPATHIC MINOR SUGGESTION

After a while, the entity will learn to do to the Travellers what it does to the people of Terminus. A minor suggestion is not compelling; it is more a sense that it would be a good idea to do something or work towards a particular goal. This is all it takes with the local population, who have generations of obedience behind them. Complying with the suggestion is voluntary, more or less. That is, the subject may not realise the idea came from outside and set about their new task as if they had thought of it themselves. Minor suggestions of this sort are short-lived but once the entity realises its instructions have to be repeated it will start to do so, building a long-term conditioning to do its bidding.

3. TELEPATHIC INSTANT SUGGESTION

The entity will refine its capabilities over time, permitting it to make a powerful instant suggestion to carry out one simple action. This may not be specific; a Traveller might be subjected to a sudden overwhelming urge to kill colleagues without any details. The instant suggestion is powerful but can be resisted by making an Average (8+) INT check. If this is failed the Traveller will carry out the instruction – or attempt to do so – as effectively as possible in one combat round.

Since the entity is still learning to use its powers, it will make mistakes. A pilot instructed to kill everyone aboard his pinnace may start to change course then realise what he is doing. The entity will learn the limitations of its ability and eventually overcome them, although in the interim it will have to content itself with minor harassment. The Travellers will become aware of a series of incidents, many of them unsuccessful and should realise the entity is growing in influence.

4. TELEPATHIC CONTROL

Multiple attempts at suggestion will eventually lead to the entity being able to control a person. Control can be resisted when first attempted and the victim can make a check to throw off the effects every 2D minutes. Once they successfully resist, the entity cannot make another attempt at control for several hours. The check to resist control starts as a Simple (2+) INT check, with the difficulty increasing as the entity makes more attempts and learns to use its ability more effectively. The Travellers should be able to spot the pattern but if they do not do something about it the entity will eventually be able to mass-control groups of people in the manner it can already do with the local population.

C H A P T E R T W O

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The following information is for the use of the Referee. Some data will be easy enough for the Travellers to obtain; in some cases they may never have all the facts. However, Travellers who come up with a good plan for obtaining information should be rewarded. Those who try to bull through without doing research first may find themselves charging headlong into trouble.

TERMINUS POINT SYSTEM

The Terminus Point system was once a binary star system containing two almost identical type K (orange) main sequence stars. The Deepnight Entity came to consciousness on a world orbiting the primary and eventually rearranged its home system to suit its needs. This involved ejecting all major bodies except the primary and its homeworld. Most were captured by the companion star or the gravitic shell once it formed, creating a very strange star system.

Today the system orbits the gravitic shell, which encloses a spherical volume in a 2.4 AU radius out from the primary. Some bodies orbit the shell, some the companion star that in turn orbits the shell. None of these bodes has a name in any human language. The description in brackets indicates a first impression gained by the Travellers. More data will be obtained by a detailed scan and survey.

TERMINUS POINT (Gravitic Shell)
Terminus Point 1 (Small Gas Giant)
Terminus Point 2 (Planetoid Belt)
TERMINUS POINT COMPANION (K8 star)
- Terminus Point Companion 1 (Unstable Terrestrial)
- Terminus Point Companion 2/Kroylos (Borderline Habitable Planet)
- Terminus Point Companion 3 (Super-Earth)

Terminus Point 3 (Large Gas Giant)
Terminus Point 4 (Iceball)
Terminus Point Eccentric Body Alpha (Large Gas Giant)
Terminus Point Eccentric Body Beta (Low-Density Terrestrial)

Terminus Point

Upon emerging from jump, the Travellers' gravitic sensors will register an enormous gravitational source at the centre of the system, which quickly resolves itself into a large number of individual high-gravity sources. Analysis indicates that it is a near-perfect sphere of point gravity sources, each of such high intensity that it can only be a singularity – the heart of a black hole. It is impossible for this to be a natural occurrence and there are no records of anything even remotely similar anywhere in Charted Space or beyond. There have been occasions where two or even three black holes orbit one another but for them to remain in a spherical configuration defies all known physical laws.

The sphere emits a constantly varying 'howl' of radio-frequency signals along with various forms of radiation. This makes it difficult to obtain sensor readings at a distance but eventually the Travellers will be able to discern that Terminus Point is a spherical arrangement of singularities with an internal radius of approximately 2.4 AU. It is the gravitational centre of the system, as might be expected. Little more can be discerned at first.

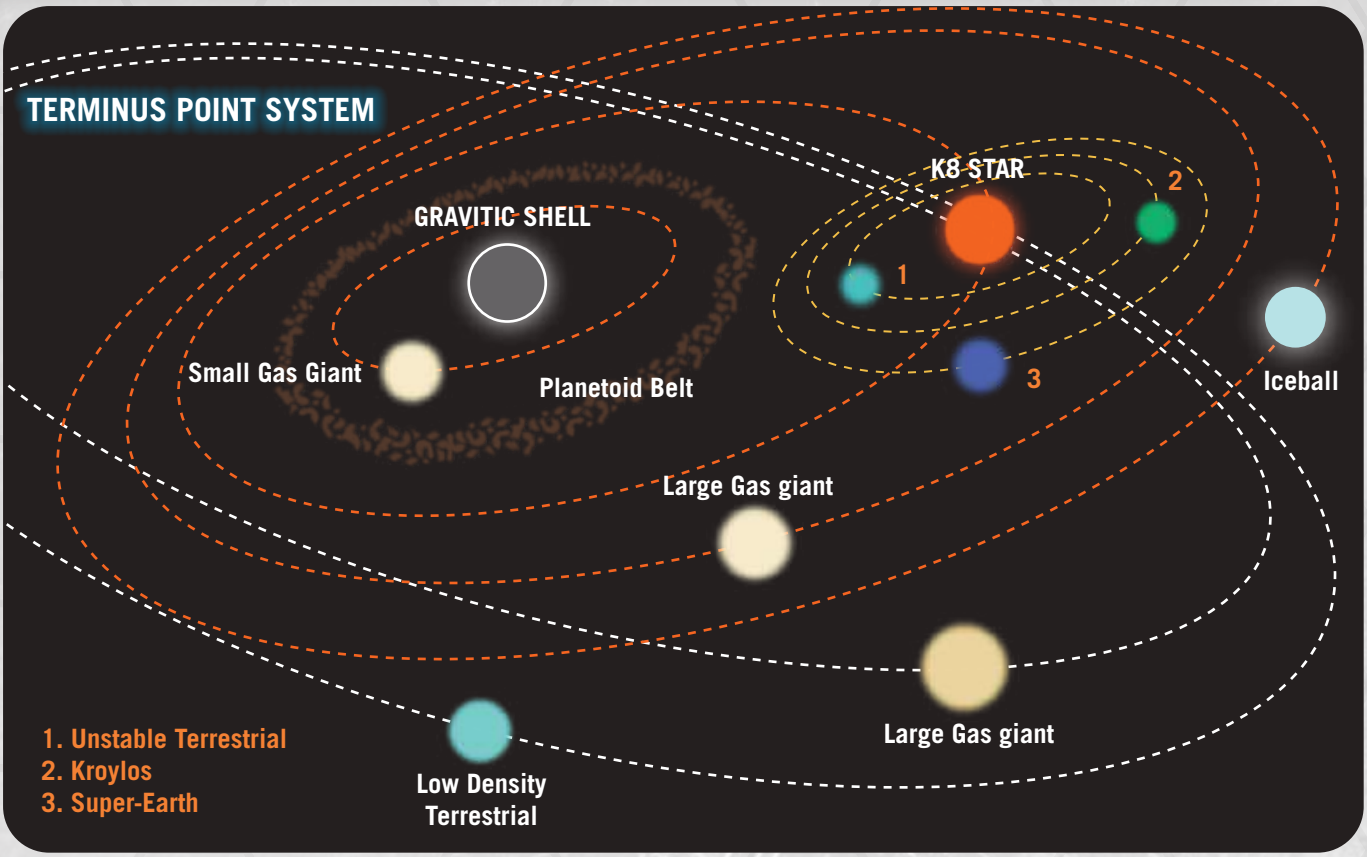
Terminus Point 1

Terminus Point 1 at first appears to be a small gas giant but it will become apparent that it would be better considered the remnant of a larger gas giant. The giant's atmosphere is elongated on the side facing towards the gravitic shell, with wisps of gas forming a spiral trace into the shell itself. It is clear that Terminus Point 1 is doomed to be absorbed into the shell within a couple of million years. Any refuelling attempt would be immensely dangerous due to the gravitational effects of the shell and incredible turbulence of the gas giant's atmosphere. The effects on Terminus Point 1 will fascinate space scientists and horrify everyone else.

Terminus Point 2

Terminus Point 2 is at first identified as a planetoid belt but further analysis suggests it is probably the remains of a planet that has broken up. The 'belt' is very uneven, taking the form of an elongated clump of planetoids and dwarf planets. A few planetoids are far from the clump, mostly spiralling in towards the gravitic shell. Some have been ejected and are headed out of the system, with a handful apparently captured by the doomed gas giant Terminus Point 1.

It might be possible to enter the planetoid clump to conduct a survey or even land on some of the bodies. This will confirm that Terminus Point 2 was once a hot rockball type world, lacking atmosphere and surface water. It has never been inhabited. Such an expedition



would certainly be hazardous, even for small agile vessels. *Deepnight Revelation* is too large to enter such a chaotic planetoid system without suffering damage.

Terminus Point Companion

Terminus Point Companion is a typical K8 (orange) main-sequence star. Its composition would be unremarkable in any other star system but here it is part of something distinctly strange. Companion once orbited much further from the system's primary but was drawn in when the gravitic shell was created. This caused significant acceleration, leading to distortion of the star. Companion's orbit is a highly elongated ellipse, resulting in further distortion when accelerating inwards or starting the outward leg. At its closest approach to the gravitic shell, Companion develops a distinctly oval shape.

Companion is orbited by three bodies, all terrestrial planets of one sort or another. Their orbits are also eccentric, suggesting they were either captured or greatly perturbed by the disruption of the star system.

Terminus Point Companion 1 (X700000-0)

Companion 1 was once a rockball world of no great significance, orbiting in the far outsystem. The creation of the gravitic shell caused it to plunge inwards, headed for destruction at the edge of the shell. It was saved, or at least granted a stay of execution, by the gravity of Companion. The capture process left it with a close and fast orbit.

Companion 1 is subject to high stresses and enormous stellar hearting, with the result that its surface is partially molten. Its rotation will eventually become tidally locked but at present Companion 1 has a slow spin at a steep angle to its orbital path. The result is that the molten face slowly rotates away from the star and cools, whilst a new region is moved into the hottest zone. Companion 1 is curiously featureless as a result.

Terminus Point Companion 2/Kroylos (X652000-0)

Companion 2 was named by the Droyne who arrived there 300,000 years ago. The Travellers will find signs of them and the name they gave the planet. Kroylos is a Droyne word referring to a group of companions who are away from their parent society and effectively have no family.

Companion 2 is a roughly Earth-sized terrestrial planet in an elliptical orbit, once an iceball captured in less radical fashion than Companion 1. Over eons Companion 2 developed life, although its lack of water prevented a major ecosystem from emerging. Nevertheless, when asteroids bearing fragments of the Deepnight Entity struck

the surface an infection resulted. The world is currently host to an immature entity, although the Travellers will not be able to detect this from a distance. They will note an atmosphere, some surface water and indications of plant life. Companion 2 is fully detailed on page 29, as exploring it is an essential part of the adventure.

Terminus Point Companion 3

Companion 3 is a super-earth with a surface gravity of 1.9gs. It was originally the only body orbiting Companion and has been perturbed relatively little in its orbit, considering the realignment of the entire solar system. Companion 3 has a thick carbon dioxide-nitrogen atmosphere, which traps a considerable amount of heat due to a greenhouse effect. The result is that despite orbiting at the very outer edge of the star's warm zone Companion 3 has liquid water. Atmospheric composition suggests life may be present but it will not be possible to determine more – such as whether the planet is infected with a Deepnight Entity – without sending an expedition.

Terminus Point 3

Terminus Point 3 orbits the gravitic shell rather than the companion star. It is a large and turbulent gas giant with a handful of small moons. It once had more but these were lost in the chaos that followed the creation of the gravitic shell. Refuelling at Terminus Point 3 is hazardous, given the turbulence of its atmosphere, but not prohibitively so. Nevertheless the Travellers may want to seek another source of fuel.

Terminus Point 4 (X4A1000-0)

Terminus Point 4 is an iceball world orbiting in the distant outsystem, largely unaffected by the rearrangement of the inner system. It has few points of interest but there are craters melted into its frozen surface where planetoids once crashed. An investigation will discover cells from the entity in some of the frost. They were transferred by a planetoid that did not make it out of the system and have remained dormant ever since they froze. It is not apparent whether any of these cells are still viable.

Terminus Point Eccentric Body Alpha

Eccentric Body Alpha is a large gas giant that once orbited the system's primary. It was perturbed from its orbit and eventually settled into a steeply inclined retrograde path. This orbit is highly elliptical and even at its closest approach Alpha is 35AU from the gravitic shell. It has no moons, although it once did; some plunged into the giant's atmosphere, triggering shock waves that wiped out the semi-intelligent species living in the upper atmosphere.

Terminus Point Eccentric Body Beta (X700000-0)

Eccentric Body Beta is a former moon of Alpha, one of several torn away in the chaos following the creation of the gravitic shell. It has few heavy or useful elements and is interesting primarily because it almost escaped the system. As a result, its orbit is hugely elongated with the body coming almost to a stop at its apogee. Perigee is inside the orbit of Alpha, at around 25AU from the shell. Further perturbation of Beta's orbit might send it crashing into the shell at high speed. It is not clear what the effects inside the shell would be but the energy released would cause devastation across the system outside.

WITHIN THE SHELL

The gravitic shell has a radius of around 2.4AU. Within are two major bodies; the original primary star of the system and the mainworld. The star, Terminus Point Primary, is a K7 that was originally almost identical to its sister, Companion. However, detailed observation will indicate the primary star is much younger – on the order of billions of years. This is due to time dilation imposed, although the Travellers will not initially know this. It is not possible that the primary formed inside an existing star system, so the Travellers may conclude it was captured or even moved to the Terminus Point system.

Orbiting the star is a single planet with an almost perfectly circular path. Initial scans indicate it is a habitable or even paradise world, with no moons. Hereafter it is referred to as Terminus. The Deepnight Entity has no name for its world and the Travellers may wish to assign one of their own.

Terminus (X7868E7-1)

Terminus is about 78% covered in seas, with a standard atmosphere and mild weather. It has a small axial tilt, creating minor variations in the seasons and is covered in lush vegetation. The seas are also full of life, from seaweed and plankton up to large fish. Animal life is common on land.

An initial orbital survey will indicate structures on the surface, varying from enormous single buildings of stone or complexes of large structures to what appear to be low-technology towns, plus what might be a mid-tech city in the far north. There are wind-powered ships sailing on some of the world's waters. In some regions the vegetation is a sickly yellow-brown colour rather than the lush green elsewhere and there are a few areas of bare soil.

Terminus has three main continents and several large island groups. The barren areas are widely distributed and scattered across all the main land masses. There are

THE PEOPLE OF TERMINUS

towns and small cities on all the continents, although there does seem to be a greater population concentration on the largest land mass. The only large city on the planet lies at the mouth of a great river, itself the confluence of three smaller waterways. The banks of these rivers have many towns, with river craft plying far into the continental interior. Oceangoing ships use the city's port.

There are no obvious signs of contamination by the Deepnight Entity, although the dead areas may suggest an infestation. The entity is present although, in the form of large and small clusters. Some are underwater and thus not obvious, while others lie deep in the middle of a forest or other heavily overgrown area. They are not deliberately concealed but are difficult to locate. A detailed search will spot small changes in the colouration and vibrancy of vegetation in some areas and further work will identify a cluster as being present. The Travellers will note that the cluster is not consuming local vegetation the way they would expect, for reasons not immediately apparent.

Plant and Animal Life

Terminus has a broad and varied ecosystem. There are curiously few predatory creatures, although it will take some time and work to discover this. Analysis of plant and animal tissues indicates they are not contaminated by the Deepnight Entity (except for a few servitors the Travellers will not initially encounter) and that every living thing is geared to a rapid maturity and explosive reproduction. The planet should be overrun with animals, mostly herbivores, munching their way through so much vegetation that the depleted food supply kept their population in check. Instead it seems to have achieved a vibrant equilibrium that is not explained by the usual production/consumption model.

One of the more common large grazing creatures is a deer-like animal, which could not possibly survive on most worlds. Its short legs cannot outrun any competent predator and it has no natural defences. These creatures are prone to being overweight, always to a significant degree and sometimes to the point of near-incapacity.

They wander the plains and scrublands in herds of a hundred or more, eating a swathe through the vegetation that regrows at a fantastic rate.

If threatened, these tubby short-legged deeroids will amble away from the threat, breaking into a panicky and clumsy run for short periods. A herd will separate into small groups of a dozen or so beasts, with apparently no mutual protection instinct. Such a creature could only evolve in an environment where it was being protected and farmed, which is exactly what is happening.

If the Travellers study the Terminus Deeroids, they will realise that there are trampled tracks, the result of millennia of migrations, running through the countryside. Not all herds follow them and those not on a track move far more randomly. These tracks all have a distinct endpoint, an area of slightly discoloured foliage where, if the Travellers think to search, a cluster lies. The deeroids seem to march into these areas as entire herds, with no sign of them beyond.

People of Terminus

The intelligent species on Terminus evolved here. They are upright bipeds covered in leathery brownish-green skin, which may at first make them look like reptiloids but in fact they are warm-blooded, more-or-less mammals. They do lay eggs, however. A typical female has more body mass than an average human male; males are a little smaller on average.

Clothing typically takes the form of a short robe or dress-like garment, with knee-length trousers and soft boots covering the ankles. Workers in harsher environments or who have to contend with thorns and similar minor hazards that can entangle a robe usually wear short tunics instead, with a poncho-like garment over the top for warmth. Head coverings are rare but most individuals wear finely worked metal decoration such as wristbands, necklaces and complex decorative items made of multiple fine chains. These are typically worn between two securing items, such as an upper arm ring and large brooch, or wristband and upper arm ring. The amount of decoration does not usually correspond to wealth or status, at least not directly.

The people of Terminus have a language of their own, which has no link to any spoken outside the gravitic shell. The Travellers should be able to decode it but this will take longer than if they had some reference point to start with. The people are generally peaceable, having known little conflict during their evolution and act cooperatively without a clear leader emerging. There are no obvious gender roles, although most egg-tending and child-rearing are done by females. Children are part of their community rather than a tight family group and it is common for all children in a local community to be cared for by females who have a fertilised egg they have not laid, on a rotating basis.

Society functions at a mature TL1. Craftsmen are capable of extremely fine work and can produce excellent tools or beautiful items, traded on a basis that at first defies explanation. There is no analogue of money in the society of the people; items are apparently given to one another on a whim. In fact there is a general appreciation of the 'worth' of an individual based on many complex factors and these worthy folk are often presented with tokens

of esteem. Worth has more to do with how much other individuals like or admire the person, rather than skill at a particular task. Since one of the worthy factors in the society of the people is generosity, gifts change hands on a frequent basis.

There is no obvious social stratification. Everyone has a skill set and tasks to perform: craftsmen, farmers, herders and so forth, and there are many individuals whose talent seems to be hard work and diligence at whatever task is before them. It is common for a worker to move from one area of endeavour to another; even experts sometimes try their hand at something new.

The people lack a leadership group, which will strike the Travellers as unusual. Some individuals will act as spokesmen for the local community but there is no particular status associated with this, nor guarantee that the same person will handle a second contact. This may lead the Travellers to believe that there is a stratum of society they are not seeing. This is correct; the people are ruled by a single godly being.

The people are not infected with the Deepnight Entity but obey it out of loyalty and a sense of rightness. It has always been there and to one of the people it is as natural as gravity or air. Objects fall when you drop them; the Deepnight Entity has power over all things. The people would struggle to comprehend a universe that did not have a living god controlling it. The idea of trying to exist amid such chaos is frightening to them.

The people are aware the entity consumes some of them; this is normal and correct. It also alters the weather and makes sure there is plenty to eat. They do not see it as a beneficent or demanding god but as the natural state of things. All people are aware of what the entity wants, in general terms, and they work towards meeting its goals without even considering refusal.

If the entity wants something specific it will communicate its needs to the people. This is not a problem; it can telepathically convey commands whenever it wants. These do not take the form of words; the person simply becomes aware that it is right and proper to do a certain thing, such as lead the Travellers to a particular place or round up animals for food.

The people of Terminus will not be alarmed by the arrival of *Deepnight Revelation*, nor as curious as the Travellers might expect. In their world everything happens for a reason and the reason is the Deepnight Entity. It is therefore correct that the Travellers are on Terminus. In a way this is true; it suits the entity's purpose for them to be there. The people will greet the Travellers in a friendly fashion unless they are obviously hostile and will happily show them around the towns and cities. Questions about the entity will puzzle the people. They do not think of it as a being or a god. In fact they do not think much about it at all – any more than anyone notices the sky or ground.

The Old Cities

The people of Terminus have one major city as well as many smaller settlements, described in detail on page 57. The Travellers will detect evidence of many other cities if they look closely. Most are almost impossible to spot, as they are nothing more than deeply buried foundations, an area of shallow topsoil with the grid pattern of what might have been roads visible to sensitive instruments.

Some of the old cities are more obvious, although even these are ruined and covered in vegetation. Investigation shows that at some time in the past – possibly as recently as 10,000 years ago – a technological civilisation existed on Terminus. The people reached TL5 or so but regressed to a more basic lifestyle. There is no evidence of conflict or mass destruction. The people will not object to the Travellers investigating the ruins but will not help either.

The cities were abandoned and their technology left where it was dropped; today the people have no interest in either. This is the doing of the Deepnight Entity. It was not concerned about the development of civilisation on Terminus; it did not disrupt the entity's plans or feeding cycle, so was irrelevant. However, after a few centuries the situation became inconvenient for the entity. Industrial agriculture and mass transport was useful but other aspects of civilisation were disruptive. The entity made its subjects want to leave the cities and they did.

Little is left of most of the old cities. Vegetation has buried most of the ruins, leaving only traces to be found with ground-penetrating sensors. There is one exception, lying on the fringe of one of the world's few very dry areas, a rain-shadow desert in the far north. Here, ruins are substantially intact. This city, hereafter referred to as Rainshadow, was inhabited by the people long after the others. Today it is abandoned but remains partially intact.

Rainshadow

The city referred to as Rainshadow lies in a dry area; not quite desert but receiving little rainfall due to a mountain range to the west. It is located in the high northern latitudes and is cold, with little vegetation around it. This region was of little interest to the entity, although it tolerated the people building a city there. When other cities were abandoned this one remained inhabited, retaining its TL5 civilisation for many centuries after technology was forgotten elsewhere.

Careful husbandry allowed the people of Rainshadow to feed themselves but, over time, the population declined and most of the city fell into ruins. Today it is inhabited by a few hundred people who retain the ability to patch up old machinery but do not really understand it. The entity is not concerned with them since the region is not a significant source of sustenance and they are as free as anyone on Terminus can be. Ironically, this makes them far more likely to be hostile to the Travellers than anyone else they might encounter.

The region around the city is a mix of arctic semi-desert, tundra and the occasional small scrubby forest. The primary grazing animal is an arctic version of the deeroids seen elsewhere. These are hunted for food by the people of the city, whose diet consists mostly of small and large game, fish from a small lake near the city and whatever they can gather or grow in small plots within Rainshadow itself.

The city is located by an intermittent watercourse, which usually has a small trickle flowing into the lake. It periodically dries up, causing the lake's water level to drop, but the lake itself and surrounding cold marshlands have always survived. People from the city can be encountered fishing, hunting in the marshlands or gathering plants.

Most of the city is in ruins but Travellers will be able to see from a distance that it was the product of a mid-tech society. Extensive use has been made of concrete and similar materials to construct workmanlike, but not attractive, buildings. Most have completely crumbled now but in some areas the lowest levels of a structure have survived. These have been cleared of rubble to create what amounts to post-technological caves.

The people of the city live in these pseudo-caves, fixing up what remains of their machinery as best they can. The result is a curious and rather sad mix of primitive tools and an attempt at retaining useful tech. For example, the standard hunting weapon is a good-quality TL4-5 rifle converted to use black powder and a flintlock mechanism. Knives are usually made from reworked metal, as are spearpoints. Astute Travellers might recognise some of the repurposed items.

The people are territorial as a result of competition for food. Conflicts between sub-groups are not uncommon and they will drive off anyone from outside their community who approaches for any reason. This includes the Travellers, with the result that an initial contact will probably be hostile. The people of Rainshadow are significantly inbred, which causes them a number of problems but makes the entity even less interested in them than it might otherwise be. They are more or less free of its influence by way of making themselves utterly irrelevant to it.

If the Travellers approach the city they may spot small, furtive groups watching them. However, the people are skilled hunters who know the landscape and may be able

to evade detection. They know the value of technological items and can guess the function of some, so they may try to steal tools or larger equipment. Attempts to capture a spy or thief will definitely result in violence.

If the Travellers do encounter hostility it will take the form of sniping and possibly an ambush rather than a horde of screaming spear-wielding fanatics. The people will hide if they can, fight if they must and flee their homes as an absolute last resort. They have nowhere else to go and know perfectly well they will freeze or starve in the wilderness.

The Travellers can learn a lot in Rainshadow but conclusions are not immediately obvious. It is apparent that the people here attained TL5 or so, then collapsed to TL1 without apparent reason, and that this happened everywhere but Rainshadow. This suggests there was a cause for the collapse and the obvious candidate is the will of the Deepnight Entity. If the Travellers ask the entity about Rainshadow it does not respond but can show them an image of an empty, desolate wasteland. From this they may infer that it considers there is nothing there. Putting this all together, the Travellers can conclude that the entity controls everything that happens on its planet, except in the places it does not care about. Rainshadow's lack of food resources is the reason the entity left the people there alone. This will bring the Travellers, or one of their researchers, to the alarming conclusion that the Deepnight Entity only cares about what it can consume.

The City

The only large city inhabited by the people of Terminus – other than the ruins of Rainshadow – is referred to by its residents simply as 'the city'. It is a well-planned metropolis, arranged in a grid pattern with residential areas and business premises of craftsmen forming blocks, each centring on a market square. There are no apparent centres of governance or public buildings.

The city straddles the lower reaches of the river, with about 20% of its structures on the western bank, 10% on a large island and the remainder on the east bank. Large stone bridges cross between the banks and the island, connecting to roads, but the main thoroughfares are canals that criss-cross the city. These are spanned by sturdy bridges high enough to allow large boats to move underneath.

Barges move constantly on the canals, bringing goods from riverside harbours and distributing them throughout the many marketplaces. The inland sides of the city have large stone warehouses for grain and other staples, plus slaughter yards for farm animals.

The overall impression is one of clean efficiency, with everyone cooperating to the best of their ability. There seems to be very little crime, if any.

Buildings are of neatly dressed stone with timber roofs. The Travellers will soon realise it would be very difficult to create structures like this using the locals' primitive technology and the city's stone-lined sewer system would seem near-impossible to build. Obviously, the entity built this city for its people; it seems like a very pleasant place to live.

About two kilometres downriver lie the sea-docks, surrounded by a harbour settlement large enough to be a town in its own right. Oceangoing ships are built in a yard on the west bank, with goods arriving at the east and shipped upriver in large barges. Again, the impression is one of cooperative efficiency. There are always enough resources but no huge stockpiles lying around or materials going to waste. Labourers and experts move from one task to another, with city dwellers sometimes joining farm workers in the surrounding villages, then returning just in time to take up the slack on a project.

Just inland from the city is what appears to be a complex of huge stone structures, taking the form of a pair of stepped pyramids flanking a wide plaza, with an even greater pyramidal structure at its far end. This structure is not square but forms a rectangle with its long side facing the city. The plaza is apparently made of stone and would be an excellent landing place for shuttles. It is connected to the main thoroughfare of the city by a straight paved road. The world's small axial tilt ensures the sun always rises over this pyramid, although it will appear at different points along its length depending on the season.

Landing at the plaza will not cause undue alarm among the few workers there. Most are engaged in keeping the place tidy, although some regularly climb the pyramids to undertake tasks there. If the Travellers keep careful watch they will see that not everyone comes back down. There does not seem to be any real ceremony to the visits, nor any apprehension among those who make them. If asked what happens there, the locals will describe the individual as 'gone to the pyramid'. They will be puzzled that anyone would ask about this but can be pressed for more details. All the locals will say is that those who go do so voluntarily 'when it is time' and that they 'will never be forgotten'. This is true, in that the entity imparts a suggestion that 'it is time' and the individual makes his own choice. Absorbed into the entity, these individuals achieve a form of immortality.

The three pyramids are thick structures of dressed stone, with walls infilled with rubble that has been fused. The technology to do this is quite beyond the locals even at the height of their civilisation. The entity uses telekinetic powers to semi-melt and push the rubble together, creating a unique kind of structure.

Entry to the pyramids is at the top, through an access chamber and down an internal stair, through a series of rooms sometimes used to store goods to be presented to the entity. Deep within each structure is a huge open space, with large stone columns supporting the ceiling, and here lies a cluster of the entity. The three pyramids collectively house the great cluster, which is linked by underground root-like growths. There are infected servitors here, although they will be kept out of sight if the Travellers make a cordial visit.

The pyramids are sufficiently thick that even a nuclear explosion would be partially contained. The largest demolition charges will level the whole city if detonated outside but smaller ones could destroy only one of the pyramids. Damage to others would likely be extensive but the entity would survive. Most other weapons would have little effect on the thick stone.

The Travellers may be able to peacefully visit the entity and close observation will reveal that virtually no food of any kind is brought to the clusters through the upper entrances. There is no need; the entity has tendrils running under the whole city. It absorbs food from warehouses and the sewer system under the city. Other tendrils run hundreds of kilometres to other sites on land or undersea, allowing the entity to feed without depopulating its city.

If physical links to other clusters were all cut the entity would struggle to maintain its great cluster. It could do so for a time by consuming the people of the city and leaching organic matter out of the soil around it but ultimately the great cluster would begin to decline. The entity is aware of this and would consider an attempt to cut its food supply as a significant hostile action requiring retaliation.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

THE FINAL CROSSING

The adventure begins with the Travellers poised on the edge of the Great Rift, seeking a path to Terminus Point. This lies some 11 parsecs out from the 'shore' of the Great Rift, requiring *Deepnight Revelation* to make three jumps. There is only one possible route unless the Travellers come up with a solution such as somehow establishing a deep-space refuelling cache or locating deep-rift comets that may have ice. This route goes by way of a remote star system and an even more isolated brown dwarf.

The Travellers will probably give their own names to the systems they pass through. For the purposes of this adventure they are designated Crossing Alpha and Crossing Beta.

CROSSING ALPHA

The Crossing Alpha system centres on an unremarkable K4 (orange) main-sequence star, orbited by what might best be described as a collection of debris. Remote scanning indicates there is no gas giant in the system – and not much of anything else, either. The Travellers should be able to find water ice among the planetoids of the system but they are betting their lives on that 'should'.

If word gets out that *Deepnight Revelation* is about to make a four parsec jump to a system that might not have any fuel, the crew will understandably become very nervous. The Travellers may be able to calm most of the jitters either by presenting good science indicating ice will be available or convincing the crew to believe in themselves. After all, they have solved problems like this along the way. The Referee should encourage a roleplayed solution to this problem rather than a simple Leadership check.

Not all of the crew can be so easily placated, however. A small group work themselves up into a state of mutually supporting panic and take action that will inhibit the use of the jump drive. This is most likely something simple like locking themselves in the jump drive chambers and activating the emergency shutdown system but it is also possible they may disable the navigational computer or take other action.

The panic party will not do anything irreversible and will not knowingly endanger the ship. They are crewmates who have struggled through the voyage alongside everyone else, not faceless baddies, and nobody wants to hurt them. However, *Deepnight Revelation* is dead in space until the situation is resolved. The panic party can be won over by assurances that fuel will be available but they are experienced spacers who cannot be conned with a few vague promises.

How the Travellers deal with this incident is entirely up to them. It will be most effective if the panic party contains a few crewmembers who have become familiar to the Travellers. The incident may highlight the strain everyone is under, as normally steady colleagues go off the rails, or might cause long-term problems if the Travellers decide to be heavy-handed either in regaining control or dealing with the panic party afterward.

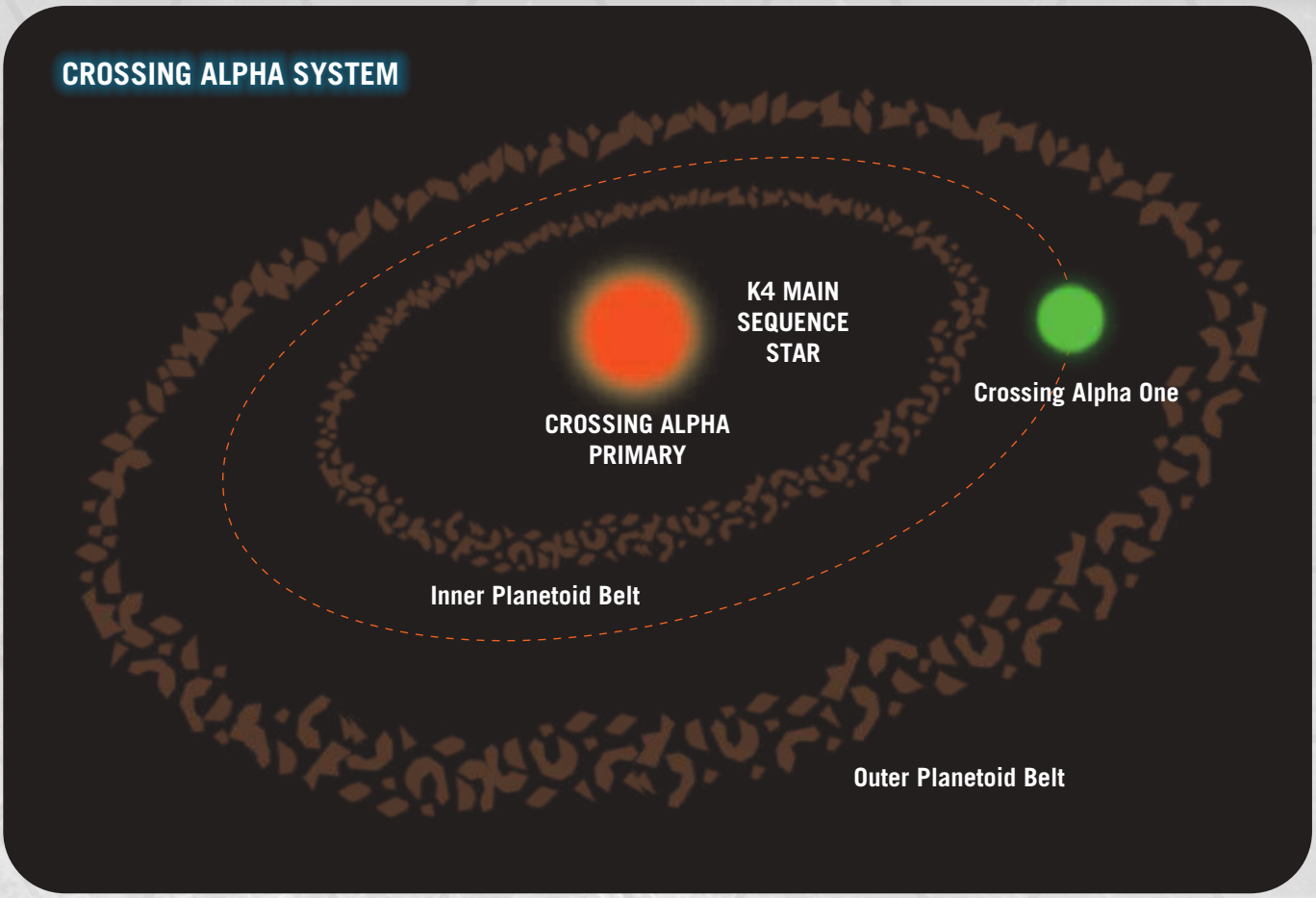
Once this incident is dealt with the Travellers can proceed to Crossing Alpha. Upon emergence from jump they find themselves in a system both sparse and complex. There is only one planet as such and it is unstable. The remainder of the system is made up of planetoids.

CROSSING ALPHA PRIMARY: K4 (Orange) Main-Sequence Star

1: Inner Planetoid Belt
2: Crossing Alpha One (Unstable Terrestrial)
3: Outer Planetoid Belt

Analysis indicates that planetary formation in this system was interrupted by the passage of a rogue body, causing early proto-planets to break up. One planet did manage to form and has swept its orbit clear of other objects. Inside and outside this orbit are wide but sparse belts of planetoids and planetesimals. The central world has been pounded by asteroid impacts since formation and is now an irregular lump of rock strewn with enormous craters. It appears to be in the process of breaking up.

The state of Crossing Alpha One will certainly be of interest to the mission scientists, who will request an expedition to its surface whilst *Deepnight Revelation* searches for fuel. This will be time consuming but not difficult to find once in the system; small craft can prospect promising planetoids for ice and gather it in varying quantities. In all, it will take 3D days to find enough ice to refuel *Deepnight Revelation* – plenty of time for an expedition.



Crossing One Alpha is a hazardous environment but not excessively so. It is a simple matter to plot the courses of nearby planetoids and ensure there will be no major impacts whilst the landing party is on the surface. Smaller micrometeorite showers are possible and there are significant dangers from unstable ground on a planet whose crust is deeply fragmented. Canyons dozens of kilometres deep have opened up, some with rivers of lava at the bottom. In all, it is a fascinating apocalyptic scene.

There are many ways for the Travellers and their crew to get themselves into trouble here but the dangers are those of a chaotic and uncaring universe rather than malice. In the weeks ahead the Travellers may come to long for simple, impersonal danger. In the meantime, however, the Crossing Alpha system provides enough fuel to continue transit.

CROSSING BETA

The Crossing Beta system is known to have a gas giant – in fact, a particularly large one – in addition to any moons or planet-sized bodies that might orbit its brown dwarf primary. There is far less unease aboard *Deepnight Revelation* as she prepares to jump to Crossing Beta.

Upon emergence, it becomes apparent that the system might better be considered a binary pair of gas giants than a true star system. The primary is as small and dim as a brown dwarf can be and its companion is a large superjovian in a tight orbit. Wisps of gas are drawn from the superjovian towards its primary and it is apparent that any rocky bodies were destroyed or ejected long ago.

Refuelling from the superjovian is a fraught business. Its atmosphere is extremely turbulent and gravitational effects from the primary are significant. This is nothing *Deepnight Revelation* cannot handle but there are still possibilities for damage. Carrying out refuelling requires a CEI check as everyone aboard will be affected by the buffeting *Deepnight Revelation* receives. A successful operation should be considered an occasion for erosion of capabilities (see page 56 of the *Referee's Handbook*), whilst failure also inflicts 2Dx50 structural damage on *Deepnight Revelation*.

It should be with profound relief that the Travellers accelerate away from Crossing Beta and prepare to jump. The hull has ceased creaking and an ominous silence descends as the jump drive begins its cycle. *Deepnight Revelation* is just a week from Terminus Point now.

C H A P T E R F O U R

TERMINUS POINT

The Terminus Point star system is detailed on page 17. In time, the Travellers may learn its secrets but upon their emergence from jump only a little data is available. Electromagnetic sensors are swamped by a constant howl of frequencies from a large object at the centre of the system. Gravitic sensors produce conflicting and confusing results, all of which point to something highly unusual. Data on other bodies of the system gradually comes in, allowing the Travellers to build a picture of the star system.

This is one of the key moments of the campaign, so the Referee should resist the temptation to deliver too much information too quickly. The initial confusing sensor readings alone will provide many opportunities for roleplaying as the Travellers try to filter out some of the noise and obtain useful data whilst the expedition's science team argue about what is causing the anomalous readings.

The Referee should bear in mind that the crew of *Deepnight Revelation* expect to confront an entity here at Terminus Point. They have no way of knowing what form it will take, although they may have made assumptions. The initial confusion caused by erratic sensor data, combined with pre-existing anxiety about the entity, will make this a very tense few minutes for the crew. It is rare that Travellers are confronted by the truly unknown, so the opportunity should be savoured.

Initial scans will indicate the following information:

- The system centres on a gravitic and electromagnetic anomaly about 2.4AU in radius.
- The anomaly is orbited by a main sequence star.
- The star is orbited by three terrestrial (rocky) planets.
- The anomaly is orbited by multiple planetary bodies, some inside the orbit of the companion star and some outside.
- The second planet orbiting the companion star appears to have atmosphere and water.
- There is a secondary gravitic anomaly in the outer system, tiny by comparison to the central one.
- There are no signals or emissions in the system suggesting intelligent life or technological civilisation.

It is likely the Travellers will want more information on each of these subjects and probably others besides. However, that is not possible. They will need to prioritise their efforts, bearing in mind that a detailed investigation of some bodies will require transiting across the star system and this could take days.

Central Gravitic Anomaly

The central anomaly can be determined to be a shell made up of point gravity sources of enormous intensity. These singularities are not identical but of similar power. They move within the shell, in a constant and apparently random manner but the shell does not get larger or smaller. Nor does it collapse, which it ought to. The behaviour of these point gravity sources defies all known physical laws, forcing the science staff to conclude that it cannot possibly be natural. They offer no useful hypothesis as to what is causing this behaviour.

Companion Star and its System

The companion star appears to be an ordinary K8 (orange) main-sequence star. Its outer planet is a super-earth; the others are apparently terrestrials. Spectrographic analysis suggests the middle and outer planets have atmospheres; the super-earth a carbon dioxide-nitrogen mix and the smaller terrestrial a nitrogen-oxygen mix. Combined with likely temperature conditions this indicates an entity could be present on either or both worlds if there is a suitable ecosphere for it to feed upon.

Second Gravitational Anomaly

The second anomaly is very small and not of the same class as the central one. It lacks the intensity of a singularity and appears to be moving. The expedition's scientists initially theorise it might be a starship or spacecraft using a manoeuvre drive not dissimilar to that of *Deepnight Revelation*. They will revise this hypothesis later, suggesting that the anomaly might be the gravitic field created by a Leviathan.

The anomaly's gravitational field spiked around the time gravitic ripples from *Deepnight Revelation's* jump emergence would have reached it. The anomaly apparently made a vector change towards the Travellers' ship but then changed direction again. Its field declined in intensity soon afterward and was lost to sensors. This behaviour matches that of a ship or spacegoing creature choosing to hide upon detecting *Deepnight Revelation*.

EXPLORING THE TERMINUS POINT SYSTEM

Once the Travellers pass through the gravitic shell there is no going back. The Referee should allow them to explore the system outside it for as long as they want. In any case, the only way to enter the anomaly is to obtain a device originally carried aboard the Droyne ship. This requires defeating both the entity on Kroylos (Terminus Point Companion 2) and the infected Leviathan.

All bodies in the system are interesting in some way, although compared to the gravitic anomaly theirs is a rather mundane sort of interesting. Still, the Travellers will visit some or all searching for clues and the Referee should play out the exploration in some detail. This is in part because the Travellers do not know what is likely to be important and what is not, and partly because this is the last exploration they will carry out before encountering the mature Deepnight Entity.

Along the way the Travellers will learn about the star system and why it is in its present state. Their space scientists should be able to back plot positions and orbits of the various bodies; this is a research project, of course, and will take some time. The first conclusion is that something enormous must have happened in the star system. The existence of the gravitic anomaly reinforces this conclusion and after much work it will be determined that the system was dramatically rearranged several billion years ago when the anomaly came into being.

It is not possible to determine whether this was a gradual process or instantaneous but given the current orbital paths of various bodies it does seem likely that the system had another star. The mass of even a giant star would not account for the gravitational force the anomaly has exerted in the past, however. What is apparent is that it was once far greater than its current value; a back plot of orbital paths suggests the anomaly is declining and may dissipate within a few thousand years or less.

The Travellers may have all manner of adventures on the worlds of the Terminus Point system but ultimately they will have to go to Terminus Point Companion 2 before they can proceed.

KROYLOS

Kroylos, as the Droyne who landed there called it, was once an outsystem iceball. Perturbed from its orbit by the creation of the gravitic shell, it spiralled inward until captured by the gravity of Companion. Millions upon millions of years passed as it settled into a stable if rather eccentric orbit, during which time it was pounded by planetoids falling towards the gravitic anomaly.

Formation of an atmosphere took a long time, after which primitive life began to develop. This slowly converted the atmosphere into something breathable by humans and similar creatures, making way for more sophisticated life. Where this process might have eventually gone is an open question; the world was infected by an entity carried aboard a planetoid ejected from inside the gravitic anomaly. For millennia it clung to existence, struggling against a climate that caused a die-back of species every time the planet's eccentric orbit took it away from Companion. Each time the world warmed, life blossomed and the entity grew a little bigger before the ecosphere collapsed.

At some point it became sufficiently powerful to make provision for its own survival. This was nothing like as sophisticated as the plans laid by the mature entity but it was able to send infected creatures into deep and sheltered places, forming clusters that required less energy to survive the next cold cycle. This gave it a head start next time around and ensured the entity was well developed when the Droyne ship *Tresskvuess* arrived.

Companion 2 is dry, with shallow seas interspersed by large areas of semi-desert. Huge impact craters are visible, along with many smaller ones; features not normally seen on worlds with a decent atmosphere. At the near-centre of one of the largest impact craters lies a small sea or large lake, more or less round other than a huge gash of a canyon that runs across it and out through one crater wall. This is filled with water and is, if the Travellers choose to investigate, over two kilometres deep.

The deep water creates a reserve that never dries up or freezes, making this one of the greenest parts of the planet. It is covered in forests of scrubby cold-climate vegetation and among them is a region with very high metallic concentration, with readings that suggest a construct of advanced alloys. If the Travellers have encountered and analysed traces of the Droyne ship *Tresskvuess,* the returns from their sensors will match readings from components of that vessel.

The components are located close together but not in a condition that suggests the ship is still intact. Parts of it might be; there are some quite large concentrations that suggest segments of hull, with many very small fragments strewn over an area of about 20 kilometres in radius.

C H A P T E R F I V E

THOSE WHO WENT BEFORE

The Droyne of the ship *Tresskvuess* reached the Terminus Point system with their ship in very poor condition. Encounters with manifestations of the Deepnight Entity had taken their toll, as had the strain of such a long voyage aboard a relatively small ship. The crew were depleted and dispirited. Like the Travellers, they made a survey of the gravitic anomaly and wondered how it had come to be. However, unlike the Travellers, these ancient Droyne had an understanding of extreme gravitic forces and how to manipulate them. They did not recognise the method the Deepnight Entity had used but knew how to circumvent it.

Gathering resources from planetoids of the system, the Droyne set about building a device to protect their ship from extreme gravitational forces. With it they would be able to penetrate the gravitic shell and attack the creature they were sure hid inside. This assumption proved to be their undoing; the mature entity did indeed lie within the shell but there was another, more primitive but still deadly, on the only habitable planet in the system.

Building the device took many months and during this time the weary Droyne crew explored the planet they came to call Kroylos. The name reflected their loneliness and isolation, and perhaps due to those factors they became complacent. The Droyne were partially resistant as a result of the counteragent they had used against the entity at XF-1402 and food they brought up from the planet was carefully screened to prevent spores being carried aboard.

The Droyne were careful but the entity needed only one mistake and eventually someone made one. The device was almost complete when the first infections began to show aboard *Tresskvuess* and the depleted crew could not resist the assault that raged through their ship. Realising they were doomed and perhaps thinking this entity was the one they had come to confront, they turned their ship's powerful weapons upon the planet below. A great gouge was cut into the crust but the weapons broke down before they could complete their work. With no options remaining, those who were infected but still resisting the entity bade their companions escape in a shuttle and attempted to destroy the entity by plunging their ship onto its lair.

What should have been a devastating dive from orbit became a violent crash landing that damaged the entity but did not destroy it. The reasons are unknown. Perhaps some automated safety system had not been disabled; perhaps an infected pilot succumbed at the last moment and chose to save their new master. Whatever the reason, the entity was badly hurt but not slain.

The survivors landed near the central mountain and took stock of their situation. They had few weapons and a malfunctioning shuttle that could not return to orbit even if there was somewhere to go. Their supplies would last a while but sooner or later they would eat something bearing spores and become servitors of the entity. They might make a life of sorts for themselves in the meantime but it was an existence without meaning.

Instead, the Droyne stripped their shuttle for everything usable and prepared themselves for an overland march. They introduced their counteragent into Kroylos' ecosphere, waited until their leaders had finished creating a monument to their brave endeavour, then they set off. Some reached the lair of the weakened entity and forced entry. A few survived long enough to confront it. One detonated a bomb made from part of the jump drive; one hurled poisoned firebombs concocted from the most toxic chemicals aboard *Tresskvuess* while another used a fusion gun. Their leader was Oyskrusk, the captain who had led them so far. He was armed with their only disintegrator.

Oyskrusk led the advance into the entity's lair, tearing out its heart with his disintegrator. It was too late for any of them by then. Infected and mortally wounded, the last survivors retired to the wreckage of *Tresskvuess*. They cleansed a compartment as best they could and Oyskrusk created a last record of their mission. His last act was to turn the disintegrator on his companions and himself, thereby – he thought – destroying the last of the Kroylos entity. The last of the Droyne died thinking they were victorious.

Oyskrusk was wrong. A few spores remained, which he had expected but the counteragent did not drive them into extinction. Kroylos was entering a cold phase and the counteragent spread slowly as a result. As the world warmed again, the entity grew. It struggled against the

counteragent and the difficult conditions on Kroylos but by the time the Travellers arrive it has grown into a major cluster centred on the wreck and its old lair.

When the Travellers arrive in orbit over Kroylos they will be able to detect the remains of the shuttle and temporary shelters at the crater's central mountain. The composition is obviously formed from Droyne alloys, although there are no power signatures. Likewise, it is obvious that the Droyne starship is in parts, some quite small, and again there are no power signatures.

THE MOUNTAIN

The crater's central mountain was created by an immense asteroid impact in the very distant past. It might not be considered a mountain elsewhere but in the flat terrain of the crater it stands out as the only major feature. The mountain is curiously regular, rising as a relatively smooth rounded cone from the crater floor – this is because it was created by an impact rather than the tectonic mountain-building.

On the shoulder of the mountain, just below the point where the soil starts to become too thin for heavy vegetation, stands the remains of a Droyne shuttle. 300,000 years have not been kind to it but the hull is still intact, almost completely buried in soil and vegetation. Getting inside will require digging and clearance of spiny plants.

There is no sign of infestation by the entity here and analysis will indicate a higher concentration of the counteragent than elsewhere in the crater. A stream running down the mountainside might have been the original point of introduction; certainly the ground around the pools, and small lake it feeds at the mountain's foot, has a high concentration but this drops off quickly with distance from the watercourse.

There are no useful artefacts in the shuttle. It was stripped to make shelters and workspaces for the crew and then again before the final march. The empty interior has a curious mausoleum-like feel to it, with swirling patterns on the walls still just visible. The Droyne alloys that make up the hull could be harvested for 10D units of rare materials and 2D units of exotic materials but most components are corroded to the point where they will disintegrate if handled with anything but the utmost care.

Around the shuttle once stood a temporary camp built with materials stripped from its insides. Some parts still stand, more or less, and these are also buried in vegetation. Shelters are cleverly built out of internal bulkheads that have been peeled apart to make thin sheets that form cabin walls. A few items of improvised furniture are partially preserved inside some of the shelters; it is clear that some were living spaces but the largest was set up as a makeshift laboratory. None of the devices inside can be salvaged, however.

Above the camp, cut into an exposed section of rock protected from the elements, is a set of carvings. As usual, most people get only a sense of dread and despair from them but a sensitive will see a vision of how *Tresskvuess* and her crew met their end. The vision is as outlined previously, embellished with images of familiar individuals going about their business. They were known to Oyskrusk, not the Travellers, so the sensitive will see them with a curious sense of community without knowing who they were.

The sensitive will come away with knowledge of the gravitic shield device and intentions of the survivors to assault the entity in its lair. The final image is of a handful of weary Droyne marching away down the mountainside to confront their enemy. Their gestures as they comfort and encourage one another seem curiously human but that could be the perception of the sensitive. All the same, what the sensitive is seeing is a band of heroes who trod the same path before the Travellers. They had vastly more powerful technology and their resolve was not less… but they failed.

Depressing as the image may be, the sensitive will be aware of the gravitic shield device. It was left in orbit and – in theory – should still be there. A scientifically-minded sensitive might even get some idea how it was made, although reproducing the technology would be a challenge.

THE WRECK AND THE LAIR

The approaches to the entity's lair are overgrown, with uneven ground beneath. Finding a safe landing place nearby is a challenge, although with some effort it will be possible to find somewhere within two kilometres of the crash site. Landing entails crushing the scrubby local bushes under a pinnace or boat, then struggling out through the tangled and broken stems.

The Travellers will immediately note that vegetation is sickly in the vicinity of the lair. It is not vibrant anywhere on Kroylos but there is clearly something making it sick here. This becomes more noticeable as the Travellers approach the wreck. To do so, they will have to struggle through tangled clumps of bushes and low spiny bramble-like plants. They will spot movement out of the corners of their eyes from time-to-time; furtive creatures that freeze and duck into the vegetation when the Travellers turn. The ground is also very uneven, largely as a result of having a starship crash land here. There are gouges in the landscape that not even thousands of

years of soil production can fill in, creating a constant threat of tripping and the occasional sinkhole or deep ravine to circumvent.

Sinkholes become more common as the Travellers move towards the wreck site. If the Travellers are using portable sensors they will pick up fragments of unusual alloys buried in the soil. It is clear from this that the Droyne ship came down hard and high concentration of metal fragments will confuse some instruments. This will take the form of fuzzy readings and false positives that quickly make the Travellers realise they will have to rely on their own senses.

The Travellers may also come under attack from the local wildlife in the form of shamblers. The entity keeps a few creatures near to act as scouts, although their utility is limited. The majority belong to a species of local herbivore about the size of a large dog. These are scaly, heavily-built but clumsy quadrupeds whose attacks might be comical if there were no danger of infection. Their only means of attack is a weak kick or bite, or a lumbering charge that causes 2D damage and might knock a Traveller over if caught unaware. A Routine (6+) DEX check is required to avoid the charge and, if struck, the Traveller must make another with a negative DM equal to the damage sustained, to avoid being knocked over.

The entity has only a few of these servitors but will readily expend them to impede the Travellers. This is highly unlikely to have much effect and after an initial period of apprehension at 'something out there' the Travellers might wonder if they are having it all a bit too easy when the animals attack. This in turn may engender more paranoia, which the Referee should encourage, but in fact the entity can only work with what it has – and Kroylos has not given it much.

SINKHOLES

There are several sinkholes in the area around the lair. Most were created when the entity pushed roots through the subsoil or exploited faults in the underling rock. A sinkhole may be concealed by vegetation and in some cases a mat of plants has grown over the top. Covered with a little soil this creates a potentially deadly threat.

To spot a concealed sinkhole before getting too close requires an Average (8+) Recon check, modified to Difficult (10+) if the hole has a complete mat of vegetation over the top. Those who fail to spot the hole and keep a safe distance may fall in. An Average (8+) Athletics (dexterity) check is required to avoid this. A sinkhole could be tens of metres deep but most lead to a cavern only around thre to five metres beneath the surface. A fall will typically cause 2D damage and leave the Traveller with the problem of getting back out but some are far more lethal.

SCALY QUADRUPED SHAMBLERS

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Shambler	15	3m
SKILLS	—	
ATTACKS	Kick or Bite (1D)	
TRAITS	—	
BEHAVIOUR	Mindless	

The entity has roots running under the whole area and from these tendrils push up to leach nutrients out of the surface soil layer in the form of organic matter. These are capable of attacking Travellers in the manner of a cluster. Those within a sinkhole will either grab or strike at everyone in the cavern for 1D damage each round. A Traveller can avoid a grab or strike by making a Routine (6+) DEX check. Anyone grabbed can tear themselves free by making a Routine (6+) STR check.

Anyone who fails to escape is in real danger. It will take the entity 3D rounds to start pushing fine tendrils into the flesh of the victim, after which self-rescue is impossible and infection certain unless the Traveller is entirely immune due to the counteragent. If this is the case, the tendrils will recoil from them and attacks are thereafter limited to flailing.

Some sinkholes have a small mass or cluster at the bottom, which can use much thicker tendrils to grab nearby prey – such as unwary Travellers – and drag them into the pit. Some of these come out of the sinkhole mouth; others run just below the soil and will tear themselves free to attack. Avoiding a grab or strike by these thicker tendrils requires a Routine (6+) DEX check. Anyone hit suffers 2D damage and may be sent reeling towards the sinkhole. Those grabbed can free themselves by making a Difficult (10+) STR check. Success indicates the Traveller has escaped.

WRECK FRAGMENTS

Most wreck fragments appear to be sections of hull surrounding major bulkheads. These are mostly buried and useful as a source of rare materials (2D from each fragment) once the area has been cleared. The fragments are buried in the topsoil with only small areas showing, so it may not be immediately apparent whether a segment is of any significance. There are three larger fragments that have survived more or less intact, which can be entered if the Travellers are willing to shift a fair amount of soil to clear an entry point.

The wreck fragments are extremely old, and for the most part heavily corroded, but their original beauty and sophistication is still apparent here and there. Bulkheads are alarmingly thin by human standards but stronger than those of *Deepnight Revelation*. Hatches are of the same fine, lightweight metal. They were designed to slide into the bulkhead using a mechanism far smaller and finer than the clumsy motors of a human hatchway and controlled automatically by the ship's central intelligence. There are no handles or emergency-open mechanisms, so any closed hatch will present the Travellers with a real challenge.

Hatches can be forced open if something extremely fine and strong is driven into the join between doors or the tiny gap between the hatch and the bulkhead it retracts into. This requires a suitable tool and 2D minutes of precise but effort-intensive work, during which the Traveller will be vulnerable to ambush by servitors. Hatches attacked this way are not opened as such but forced off their mountings, meaning they cannot be sealed again.

Hull Section

This segment of the wreck is a section of cargo or general space. The main area is surrounded by bulkheads that are only partially intact, creating a small artificial cavern with an uneven floor of damp earth. Two sub-chambers, probably living areas at one time, can be reached by way of hatches at the rear of the chamber. One is twisted and already off its mountings, the other more or less intact.

Both hatches lead to areas that have been compromised. Holes in the bulkhead have allowed soil and organic matter to get in, the nearby entity may have pushed a tendril into the chamber. There is nothing physically useful in this section of the hull, although swirling patterns of decoration on the walls and ceiling are still breathtakingly beautiful. They will fascinate (and possibly distract) researchers with an interest in the Ancients.

A sensitive will see more. This time there is no sense of dread but instead a feeling of harmony, mutual effort and cooperative endeavour. The patterns say, in the form of a triggered telepathic impression: 'This was the Droyne ship *Tresskvuess.* It was well made and served its purpose in the correct manner. It was viewed with satisfaction and approval by its crew.' The triggered impression is a curious mix of bland and emotion-free yet filled with affection and pride. A sensitive Traveller will be left with a deep feeling of sadness that this gallant vessel met her end so far from home.

Machinery Section

This section of the hull was located somewhere aft and contained part of the ship's machinery. Entry is gained through a shattered area half-full of soil and decaying plant matter but a partly-intact hatchway leads into a chamber where ancient Droyne crewmembers once worked. Little is left of softer materials but the consoles and curiously shaped seats in front of them are still recognisable. Consoles are flat and featureless now but when the ship had power they would have had displays and controls projected so a psionic crewmember could interact with them.

The machinery is not in working condition but could be salvaged with great effort. This would require a major excavation taking a few days for a couple of dozen workers and not feasible with the entity still active nearby. If the Travellers have time they can take a significant amount of Ancients technology aboard *Deepnight Revelation* for study. This will not be useful on the time frame of the *Terminus Point* adventure but may solve problems or create opportunities at some future time when it has been studied in detail. A quick grab-what-we-can will yield a few loose or detachable items that might be useful in the future.

A hatch at the rear of the chamber leads into a smaller area that has remained sealed. This appears to be some kind of storage area, with racks of boxes along its length. The boxes and even the racks are composed of Ancients alloys and are priceless back home in Charted Space. Aboard *Deepnight Revelation* they might be used to patch armour or create high-capability tools. Likewise, spares and components in the boxes are unrecognisable in most cases but could be scavenged for useful materials.

Plundering the components store completely will take 24 man-hours and yield a treasure trove of potentially useful items – but nothing that can be put to immediate use. The Travellers can extract items worth 3D exotic materials per man-hour, assuming they take boxes, shelves and everything else they can lay their hands on. The exotic materials can be used as normal, whilst components should be considered by the Referee as potential plot devices. If at some time in the future the Travellers come up with an idea to create a gizmo from Ancients components the Referee may allow them to do so with appropriate effort. After all, where they are going they will need all the advantages they can get. The Travellers should not be permitted to create anything resembling a win-button, however.

During the search of the chamber the Travellers will find the remains of two Droyne technicians, still in silvery vacc suits. Sterile conditions in the chamber have partially preserved their remains, although most of their organic matter has decayed to dust. Analysis of the remaining pieces of bone and tissue will indicate they were infected but that a counteragent was present in their metabolism, which may have slowed or halted the process. If the Travellers do not already have one by now they can use this data to create a counteragent of their own after a suitable research project.

How the Travellers treat the bodies of the Droyne will say a lot about them and could be one of the defining moments of the campaign. The vacc suits have some salvageable components and cynical Travellers may simply strip the corpses and take what they can get. However, by now the Travellers should know that the Droyne crew of *Tresskvuess* were brave and resourceful. They honoured their dead and loved their ship. The Travellers might even see them as a strange sort of friends. There is no danger of infection from the bodies, so the Travellers are free to do whatever they please. If they treat the Droyne in an honourable manner, perhaps the cosmos might be kind to them at some point. The Referee need not invent a 'karma mechanic' but decent people might catch a break sometime. Those who just pillage corpses do not deserve one.

Forward Section

Although the nose of the ship was smashed during the crash and distributed as small fragments along the path of its final skid, a segment of the hull remains intact. This can be accessed through the shattered front of the segment, leading into a chamber that has been resealed by somehow welding the door back in place. If the Travellers can get this open they find an almost totally empty chamber inside, with fine dust covering the floor. There are no furnishings, just bare bulkheads covered with patterns that are brighter and more vibrant than those found in other chambers. A chamber like this would have had furnishings but there are no sign of them.

The only object in the chamber is an ovoid of shiny ceramic-like material, shaped to fit the hand of a Droyne. It gives off no discernible power readings but a telepath will recognise it is a psionically controlled tool. In fact, this is the disintegrator used by Oyskrusk in his battle against the entity. Its function is heavily degraded now, making it little use as a weapon but a telepath or perhaps a sensitive can use it as a precision tool to cut materials or utterly destroy small amounts of matter. Range is less than 50 centimetres but with some practice the disintegrator can be used to cleanly cut Ancients alloys or cleanse an area of the entity's spores – providing they can be found and identified. The disintegrator could be built into a medical device to remove all traces of infection from a patient. This would require a great deal of research – and a psionically sensitive operator – but it is a way for the Travellers to be fully rid of infection once the campaign is over.

The patterns on the walls give most people a sense of bittersweet triumph but a sensitive can see much more. This is the final record left by Oyskrusk, the Droyne captain. The sensitive gains an impression of a cavern nearby, of the band of Droyne battling tendrils and servitors to confront the entity directly. Some fell on the way and Oyskrusk disintegrated their bodies to deny

WRECK FRAGMENTS

HULL SECTION

MACHINERY SECTION

FORWARD SECTION

them to the enemy. Finally, they reached the chamber of the entity and destroyed it. Wounded and infected, the crew returned to an intact segment of their ship and created this record. The last clear image is of Oyskrusk's intention to disintegrate himself and his comrades to expunge the last of the infection from the world they had come to know as Kroylos.

Oyskrusk's record shows the device the Droyne had made still in orbit, waiting for whoever came after them. There is a sense of curiosity about the anomaly and the idea that perhaps it somehow influenced the development of the entity here. Oyskrusk regretted that he would never know but was content in the knowledge that he had completed his great voyage, confronted the great enemy and destroyed it.

In a nutshell: 'They thought they had won'.

THE LAIR

When the entity finally regrew from the few spores that remained, it was dispersed as several small clusters across the whole crater region. These eventually connected to one another by way of underground root systems and focussed growth in the most sheltered and protected spot. This is the cavern its previous incarnation occupied. There was no planning or memory involved in this choice; the entity simply made the same decision its predecessor had for the same reason. If the Travellers have found the carvings in the wreck they will recognise the location, which may cause some sadness – the Droyne expedition were absolutely convinced they had eradicated their enemy.

The entity's main cluster is located in the deepest part of the cavern, with a smaller cluster blocking the entrance to this chamber. These are connected to the outside world by tendrils running out of the entrance into the soil outside and down through cracks in the cavern floor. There are also patches on the walls and ceilings, all connected with more tendrils, and at first it is not possible to discern which pose an active threat to the Travellers.

Infectees and telepaths will feel the entity's presence. For infectees this takes the form of a compulsion to attack their comrades and protect the entity. This can easily be ignored by a Traveller who concentrates but someone who is startled or confused may find their weapon pointing at a friend without being able to remember why. Telepaths are not subject to attempted control in this manner but will feel a thoughtless hunger. The entity in the cavern is not a conscious mind but it is a powerful one.

The entity will defend itself with lashing tendrils as the Travellers approach the outer cluster and call its servitors to attack them. The defence is haphazard and uncoordinated, with servitors shambling out of the deeper cavern or lurching towards the cavern from elsewhere and going on the offensive as soon as they arrive. There are no tactics to the defence; the blocking cluster will still grab Travellers to pull them in and feed on their tissues, even if this is not the most efficient way to protect itself.

Getting past the outer cluster requires clearing it – probably by hacking or burning a path. The outer cluster has 50 hits and gives access to a deeper cavern in which the main cluster lies.

The main cluster is likely to be more or less defenceless by the time the Travellers arrive. It has some tendrils to lash or grab with but its servitors will have been expended protecting the smaller cluster. This is a truth the Travellers may already have learned about the Deepnight Entity; it can only work with what is available and since Kroylos has no animals suitable as servitors the entity is limited by the capabilities of the local herbivores.

Nonetheless, destroying the entity will be a difficult undertaking unless the Travellers use extreme measures such as a nuclear demolition charge. The Kroylos entity is somewhere between mature cluster and proto-entity, with 300 hits and the ability to regenerate 4D damage per round. Eliminating this mass without becoming infected may be a challenge but with persistence and the right tools the entity can be eradicated.

The Travellers may wonder if, for all the effort required, killing the Kroylos entity was not a bit too easy. The Referee should note that the situation has nothing to do with 'play balance' or any such concept. The entity was as powerful as local conditions allowed it to be; no more or less. There are lessons to be learned here. The first is that the entity is limited by local ecological conditions – which may make the Travellers wonder how powerful it could become if it had the right ecosphere to feed upon.

The second lesson to be learned is what happens when an entity is in extremis. When the Travellers exit the cavern they will find vegetation for several kilometres dying. If they have access to aerial or orbital images they will be able to plot the paths of the main root/tendrils of the entity. The remnant of the entity has gone into a feeding frenzy, infecting and consuming every scrap of organic matter to try to regenerate itself.

In a matter of hours, clumps of the entity's tissues – equivalent to large colonies and occasional minor cluster – will begin to push up through the ground along the path of larger roots. It becomes quickly apparent that the whole area has been infiltrated by the entity and eradicating it will be more difficult than it may have seemed. The danger of infection is unusually high, as every cluster begins ejecting spores to spread its tissues. These form small versions of the clouds encountered elsewhere, moving towards the nearest large concentration of suitable tissue. This may be clusters of vegetation but any Travellers remaining in the area will attract clouds on a continual basis.

These new clusters are not hard to kill, typically only having 5–10 hits but destroying them does not prevent others from emerging along the path of a root. If the Travellers could organise enough burn-and-kill parties to prevent new clusters from taking hold, the organic matter feeding the explosion of growth would be used up and the entity might die for lack of food. This has the potential to take on the proportions of a gigantic fairground game, in equal parts comical and lethal, and would probably result in many crew being lost to infection.

Alternatively, the Travellers might try to eradicate the entity by more extreme means. Nuclear charges will cause an impressive amount of destruction but not be sufficient. If the Travellers do not realise it, the expedition's scientists will point out that whilst there is a radius of total destruction around a nuclear explosion it will not be enough to completely sterilise the whole crater region. Enough nukes, in a simultaneous bracket pattern, would do the job but there would still be a risk of spreading spores in the fallout. The best the Travellers could hope for by this method would be to set the entity back a few thousand years more on top of the time it will take to regrow from the destruction of its main cluster.

If the Travellers try to use *Deepnight Revelation's* weapons, they will find the particle accelerator is attenuated by atmosphere to a degree whereby it cannot do much damage at ground level. Fusion guns could be used but this requires descending into the atmosphere, which *Deepnight Revelation* is not designed to do. Her main drive is entirely sufficient to overcome the planet's gravity but she does not have the ability to hover. Using the fusion battery would require either a series of passes or a highly unpleasant series of unpowered drops followed by harsh acceleration back to altitude.

If the Travellers attempt a gun pass, a Difficult (10+) Pilot check is required to set it up. Failure indicates the guns did not come within range of the infected area before the pilot had to sheer off. Success indicates the battery was fired over the crater area and has incinerated whatever was on the ground or in the topsoil. Either way, *Deepnight Revelation* suffers 2Dx10 Hull points in stress damage per pass and this should be considered an erosion of capabilities.

Multiple passes will be needed. The Referee should note the total Effect achieved and when it reaches +10 the crater area resembles a scorched wasteland. This will probably eradicate the entity from Kroylos, either directly or by creating conditions where it cannot survive in the long term. However, damage to the ship is inevitable. The Referee should not be lenient about this. For one thing, eradicating a major infection like this is no small thing and should require sacrifices. Also, the Travellers may find it helpful when confronting the entity on Terminus to have some idea what it would take to get rid of a planetary-scale infestation.

It might be possible to dismount the fusion guns from *Deepnight Revelation* and either fit them to a small craft or somehow create a planetside weapon system. This would be quite a project however, so if the Travellers have not already tried it elsewhere they may not have time. It may be that they have to leave the infestation on Kroylos only partially destroyed. There is one sure way to destroy the entity, however. Crashing a suitably large asteroid into the surface would do the job. It is possible to calculate the trajectory such that the rock comes down somewhere near the crater – precision is not really necessary with a large enough projectile.

Again, this is quite a long-term project but sending a planetoid on a collision course with Kroylos would be an effective insurance policy on the part of the Travellers. Of course, it means in all probability wiping out the entire ecosystem of a unique world – one that developed life against all odds, having started as an outsystem iceball. Philosophically minded Travellers may consider this one of the worst aspects of the Deepnight Entity; the measures needed to protect against it are entirely horrific. After all, the purpose of life is to continue and the entity is doing nothing that every other form of life does not do. To counter it, the Travellers are exterminating life. Which, then is the monster?

Whatever the Travellers decide to do about the entity on Kroylos, they have another problem in the form of the infected Leviathan.

C H A P T E R S I X

SLAYING THE LEVIATHAN

The Travellers may confront the infected Leviathan before landing on Kroylos or perhaps it will approach *Deepnight Revelation* whilst operations are taking place planetside. This will create a highly complex situation, pulling the Travellers' attention back and forth between two different sets of problems. This can be dramatic, and will present a memorable challenge for clever Travellers, but it may be too much for some groups.

If the Travellers have not dealt with the infected Leviathan by the time they have destroyed the entity on Kroylos, they will need to do so. It represents a combination of an adult Leviathan and a proto-entity; the Leviathan came to be infected several centuries ago when it encountered tissues of the Deepnight Entity on a planetoid drifting through deep space. Infection was slow but the life span of the Leviathan was long and eventually it came to be controlled by the entity growing inside it.

The Leviathan was drawn to the Terminus Point system on an instinctive level and made a home there. It feeds on carbon molecules harvested from the gas giant's atmosphere and energy from Companion. At times it will fly close to the gravitic shell but has never learned how to enter. In time it might, as the entity's powers grow and it comes to understand the Leviathan's gravity-manipulation powers more completely.

For the time being, the Leviathan has created a nest out of planetoids and other objects, including the gravity shielding device created by the Droyne. This is located in the trailing Trojan asteroids of Terminus Point 3. Observation of the Leviathan will indicate it keeps returning to that area, often after making forays to the gas giant to plunge into its atmospheres. It is possible the mission scientists will (correctly) deduce that it is feeding young.

The Leviathan currently resembles a travesty of the species' normal beauty. Its outer skin/hull is marred in places by patches of fungus-like entity material and some of its gossamer tendrils are replaced with ropy tentacles. The fact that this creature could spread infection to any world it visits, and is free to go wherever it pleases, is reason enough to destroy it. The possibility that it is raising a brood of infected young is too serious to ignore.

The Leviathan could be encountered anywhere in the system but will investigate if it senses the one on Kroylos is under attack. It may take time to get there and may not necessarily attack when it arrives. The Leviathan will definitely investigate *Deepnight Revelation* and may come close enough for its infection to be visually apparent. Since it can accelerate much faster than the ship, it can avoid combat if it chooses and will flee from a losing fight, with one exception. The Leviathan will defend its nest to the death.

Battling the Leviathan itself will likely take the form of a straight ship-to-ship fight. This one is large, at around 600 metres long and has 10,000 Hull points with Armour: 12 – it might be considered the equivalent of something close to a 20,000 ton vessel.

This entity has PSI 3. It possesses the Telepathy talent but has never had cause to use it, at least not deliberately. Both Leviathan and entity are sub-human in intellect, so it cannot communicate meaningfully even if it learns how. Conversely, it cannot defend its thoughts – such as they are – from another telepathic creature. A Traveller may be able to pick out vague memories of how the Leviathan became infected and voyaged to this star system following impulses originating from the entity as it grew.

The Leviathan telepathically broadcasts its emotions on a constant basis. It is not aware of doing so and does not deliberately use this as a weapon. However, anyone within 1,000 kilometres who does not have telepathic shielding will be aware of its overwhelming hunger and need to infect other creatures. The intensity of this emotion is potentially disorientating; actions by unshielded people within 1,000 kilometres are subject to DM-2. This includes whole-crew actions using CEI or DEI.

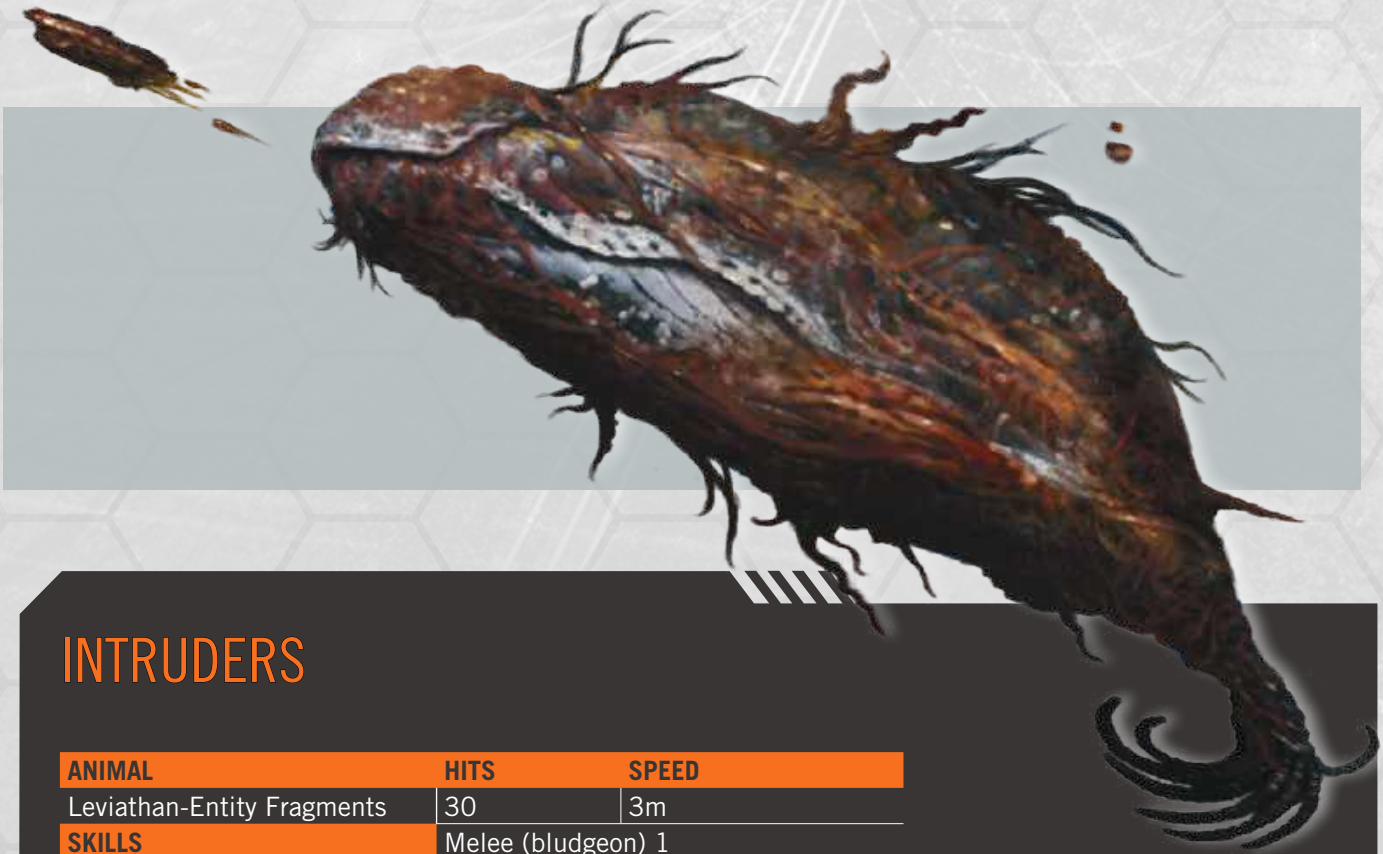
As the Leviathan takes damage it will regenerate but Leviathan tissue will be replaced with cells made by the entity and it is possible the Travellers will be able to observe the transformation of the creature as it fights. Regeneration for a cluster is normally at the rate of 6D hits per six second combat round but the Referee may choose to average this at 120 Hull points per starship combat round.

If the Travellers use a particle accelerator against the Leviathan they may observe a disturbing phenomenon. The Leviathan feeds, in part, by absorbing energy and may be able to use that of the particle accelerator to regenerate damage. The first time it is hit, the weapon has its normal effect. Thereafter normal damage is applied but on a roll of 8+ on 2D the Leviathan has learned to use the concentrated energy. DM+1 applies to this check for every subsequent strike.

Once the Leviathan has learned to use the particle accelerator's energy it still takes normal damage but the next round it will regenerate 2Dx500 Hull points. The new tissue will be the twisted fungal growth of the entity. The Referee should not present the Travellers with details of how many Hull points are being regenerated; instead, describe the way entity-tissue rapidly replaces that of the wounded Leviathan. The Travellers can draw their own conclusions, although those who make careful observations will eventually be able to figure out that their weapon is capable of killing the creature and that its ability to feed from the high-energy particles is extensive but limited.

The Leviathan is far more aggressive than others of its kind. It will not make the usual feather-slap but immediately attack with its gravitic induction ability, trying to spin or flip *Deepnight Revelation* as well as cause damage. Unless the pilot makes an Average (8+) Pilot check (DEX) this will toss crewmembers about, causing 2D damage to all crewmembers not strapped into seats or otherwise secured if they fail an Average (8+) DEX check.

The Leviathan will then ram *Deepnight Revelation*. This charge can be evaded but that will require a Very Difficult (12+) Pilot check (DEX) as the Leviathan is capable of producing very high and sudden acceleration. Contact results in 2Dx1,000 damage to the ship and half that to the Leviathan. It will only make one



INTRUDERS

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Leviathan-Entity Fragments	30	3m
SKILLS	Melee (bludgeon) 1	
ATTACKS	Tentacles (2D)	
TRAITS	—	
BEHAVIOUR	Mindless	

successful ram, since the damage it suffers is likely to be excessive. However, it will try until it manages and may even kill itself in the effort.

Between ram and flip attempts, the Leviathan will try to grapple *Deepnight Revelation* with its tendrils. Avoiding this attack requires a Difficult (10+) Pilot check (DEX). If grappled, the ship cannot use her particle accelerator against the Leviathan unless it is positioned across the muzzle – which is unlikely. Tendrils will start digging into the hull, seeking weak points, causing 1Dx50 Hull points in damage per round to the ship. Shaking the creature off requires a violent full-thrust manoeuvre with the same chance as evading the original grapple. Fire by smaller weapons such as lasers or fusion barbettes will still be possible at the Referee's discretion.

During the attack, the Leviathan sheds lumps of tissue. Some are blasted off but others are deliberately spat at *Deepnight Revelation*. Most end up splattered on the hull and will eventually be removed or may just fall off but some will find chinks where damage has occurred and get inside the ship. Once inside, these gobbets of tissue will form themselves into a central mass and several ropy tentacles. They do not need air to function and will seek out anything they can feed on, which may mean food stores or – more likely – crewmembers.

Ideally the fight with the Leviathan will be a confusing, desperate scramble in which *Deepnight Revelation* is significantly damaged. The Travellers will have to cope with a giant creature that may be partially immune to their weapons attacking the exterior of the ship and an incursion by monsters. Gunners will have to man their weapons whist the tactical team conducts a bug-hunt through the next section… and of course nothing disrupts command and control like a monster loose on the bridge!

How many there are and where they get into the ship depends upon dramatic necessity. The Referee should note the possibility of associated problems such as decompression, severance of control pathways and structural damage. All these factors will make the fight chaotic and truly frightening.

THE NEST

The nest takes the form of a cluster of planetoids and other debris, slowly drifting apart to be pushed back together when the Leviathan visits. A high concentration of exotic materials can be detected at its heart but no conventional power signatures. There are other emissions, which can be recognised as very similar to those of juvenile Leviathans.

Entering the nest would be impossible for *Deepnight Revelation* herself, although she could nudge some of the planetoids aside and open up a space for small craft. Getting this close exposes the ship to attack, which may not be a good idea given her recent battle. Small craft and personnel in vacc suits using manoeuvring jets could thread their way through the planetoids to locate the Droyne gravity shield device.

The device is large, displacing some 250 tons, and is more or less in the centre of the nest. Anyone working outside a craft, trying to attach tethers for example, will be attacked by creatures similar to the intruders on page 40. Craft may come under attack from juvenile Leviathans. These are clearly infected with the entity and very small compared to their parent. Most are around 5–10 metres long, with 50–150 Hull points, no armour, and regenerate 2D Hull points per round.

Getting towing tethers on the device will take a skilled EVA crew of four to six personnel around 10 minutes, during which time they must be protected against attack. Once tethered, the device can be carefully towed out of the nest and brought aboard *Deepnight Revelation*. It is possible that intruders might be clinging to it or a juvenile Leviathan may charge through open cargo bay doors. This will leave it flopping on the deck as its own gravity generation capability cannot cope with the steady field of the deck plates, at least at first.

The creatures are dangerous even when beached and once it learns to compensate for the internal gravity field the Travellers will have a new challenge on their hands. It will be fast but clumsy inside the ship, capable of smashing into people and equipment to cause serious damage.

It will be attracted to high energy sources and can feed from both organic matter and the many electromagnetic fields within the ship. If locked in a chamber and left to starve, it will actually thrive and grow larger or be completely consumed by the entity and become a cluster. This is a new kind of entity – one that can feed off energy rather than life. The implications of this will no doubt horrify the Travellers… as they should.

C H A P T E R S E V E N

INTO THE EVENT HORIZON

Once the Droyne device has been secured – and hopefully cleared of any contamination – the Travellers can go about trying to install it. Figuring out how to supply power and control signals will be a challenge for the expedition's scientists, requiring a Lengthy, Extended project. 16 Research Points are needed per breakthrough and two breakthroughs are required to make the device function.

The first breakthrough results in power being provided at the right levels and locations in the device. At this point it behaves erratically, causing strange gravitational effects throughout the ship. The intensity of fields created by deck plates will be increased in some areas of the vessel and nullified or reversed elsewhere. The effect is mostly comical but there will be some injuries and the occasional alarming groan from a section of the hull suddenly exposed to internal torsion.

The second breakthrough allows the device to be controlled to a rudimentary degree, after which it can be calibrated and tested. Wise Travellers will want to try the device out using the relatively small gravitational fields around planets or perhaps the companion star before plunging into the gravitic shell. With some experimentation they can establish that the device will protect *Deepnight Revelation* from intense gravity fields but there are limits. Exactly how close the ship can get to a singularity without being pulled apart can only be established by pushing the limit until the failure point is found – which would be fatal for everyone aboard.

WHY ENTER THE SHELL?

The Travellers may come to the conclusion that they have slain their foe and start preparing to head homeward or they may be too overawed by the gravitic shell to enter it. They may need to be reminded that their mission was to investigate Terminus Point and the great mystery now lies before them along with a key to unlock it. Have they voyaged for years to reach this place, only to cower in fear before the dark cave of mysteries? Will they slink away without even trying to unravel the secrets of Terminus Point? Have they deluded themselves that they have already won and what lies before them is merely an interesting gravitic phenomenon?

The expedition crew will include a few who think this way but the majority remember their mission orders. Frightening as the prospect of entering the shell may be, there are few willing to turn around and make the decade-long voyage home without trying. If the Travellers are still reluctant, they will be confronted by a delegation from the crew who point out two important facts:

1. The shell appears to be hollow. This means there is something inside. *Deepnight Revelation* came here to find out what it is.
2. The entity on Kroylos was not very powerful. Can the Travellers really be sure they have vanquished what the Droyne expedition referred to as 'the extinction of all life'?

If the Travellers are adamant they will not enter the shell, they will face a near-mutiny among the crew, or perhaps a faction will try to seize control and take the ship in without the consent of the command crew. This could be done from the command or engineering bridge providing the Travellers were somehow locked out of the main control systems. The mutineers need not actually navigate the shell itself; they could simply put the ship on a course to be captured by the shell's gravitational field. This would present the Travellers with a choice between quickly figuring out a course through the shell or being destroyed when the gravitational shield device could no longer protect them.

The Travellers may choose to enter the shell or may be forced into doing so. However, it may be that they simply will not. Travellers can be stubborn like that. If so, they can have all manner of adventures on the way home and may even have good answers for the hard questions about why they abandoned their mission in sight of the final goal. They will live out their lives and be long gone before the gravitic shell collapses… but when it does the Deepnight Entity will emerge and begin expanding across the galaxy. It is hard to imagine a greater failure.

The Travellers can establish that it is possible to chart a path through the gravitic shel,l which keeps them a significant distance from each of the singularities. It seems likely the gravitic shield device will nullify the time dilation effect of passing close to a singularity but it is not possible to say for sure. If the Travellers consider the effects on the jump drive, their science staff are reasonably sure the device would reduce the effects of high gravity on the drive but not eliminate them. It would thus make jumping from close to a planetary surface – say within 30 diameters instead of 100 – much safer. This is theoretical, however, and can only be tested one way. The device will not allow *Deepnight Revelation* to jump inside an object's 100 diameter limit or Jump Interference Zone. It cannot be used to jump into the gravitic shell, nor jump out again whilst the shell is intact.

Sensor data indicates the gravitic shell is hollow. Its internal radius is about 2.4AU and the gravitational field of each singularity suggests their mass is not much more than that of a large planetoid or perhaps dwarf planet. The field is strangely distorted by some means that cannot be explained with the data available but the end result is that the shell is about 0.1AU thick, with thousands of point gravity sources moving within it. Their paths are complex but mostly predictable, so it is possible to plot a course through the shell without getting too close to one.

Setting up the course requires a Formidable (14+) Astrogation check (2D hours, INT). Failure reduces the difficulty level by one, initially to Very Difficult (12+) and eventually lower, until a course is available. It requires entering at high velocity and making course corrections with gravitational assistance from the point sources, creating a snaking curve through the shell. Serious or crippling damage would be inevitable but for the gravitational shield device. With it in operation the ship should be able to make the passage unharmed. However, the mission's scientists say, this is partially speculation.

THE PASSAGE

The Referee should tread a fine line between discouraging the Travellers and making them realise just how off-the-map-incredible what they are about to attempt is. They plan to charge headlong into a moving web of singularities, charting a course into a completely unknown region inside, using a device cobbled together by a ship full of Droyne who failed to reach their goal. This is truly a leap into the unknown and, unsurprisingly, it will not go according to plan.

Armed with their course plot, the Travellers can initiate the high-speed approach. This means accelerating for some time and there will come a point where they can no longer shear off if they change their minds. Such are the distances and velocities that PONR (Point Of No Return) is passed several minutes before entering the shell. Throughout the ship, glasses are raised in a final toast, friends say goodbye just in case, a few enemies are reconciled and long-suppressed emotions are released. It is possible that key personnel are not at their posts as the final approach is made – last-second trysts or fistfights may occur in the most unlikely of places – whilst some of the crew just strap quietly into their seats and wait for whatever is about to befall them.

Final approach is a maelstrom of visible light and electromagnetic signals. Both are scattered as multipart rainbows by the intense gravitational forces. Sensors overload and go down; receivers pick up nothing but static. The hull vibrates and internal gravity begins to twist in strange directions. And then….

The Outer Shell

Deepnight Revelation hurtles between singularities, entering the shell obliquely but using a singularity's gravitational field to curve her path inward. Time seems to stretch and distort, creating a feeling of unreality. Psionic Travellers gain a sense of immense power controlling and maintaining the singularities. Their fields are intensified and pulled in unnatural directions and psionic Travellers are in no doubt it is being done by an almighty intellect.

All actions taken by the Travellers and their crew are subject to DM-2, including purely technical and mental tasks. This is due to a combination of disorientation and physical conditions such as 'down' not being in the right direction for more than 10 seconds at a time.

Through the sensor mayhem the bridge crew (and anyone else paying attention) realise something utterly horrifying; a nearby singularity is moving rapidly. Others are changing direction, as if something was disrupting the orchestrated ballet of their drift. This is exactly what is happening; the gravitic shield device is behaving like a stone thrown into a pond and the shell is rapidly destabilising.

Deepnight Revelation's carefully plotted trajectory is unravelling, potentially sending her close to a singularity. This is not the only problem; one of the singularities becomes a maelstrom of distorted gravitational forces, then explodes in an uncontrolled release of energy vastly greater than any mere nuclear explosion. *Deepnight Revelation* is bathed in a howling vortex of electromagnetic emissions and her systems white out. In that moment, some crewmembers can see the whole universe or so they think. Others see Hell or

so it seems. Then the ship is plunged into darkness; every light extinguished, the hum of ventilation falling silent for the first time in years, integral gravity failing or changing direction. It is not possible to say for how long but that moment of utter blackness feels like a lifetime to many of the crew... and for some it may be just that.

All Systems Down

Deepnight Revelation is in desperate danger. Her drive is offline, she is blind and deaf with no idea if she is about to impact a singularity or if another is about to collapse and cause further mayhem. Confused, disorientated and hurt, her crew have moments to save the ship.

There is a trickle of power reaching most areas; enough to take action if the Travellers are careful but almost all available power is being absorbed by the gravitic shield device. It is still protecting the ship and a further dip in power output will result in gravitational damage leading to cascading failures and eventual destruction. Use of the few instruments that still work allows the Travellers to determine the following:

- The main power plant has overloaded and undergone an emergency shutdown.
- Most of the secondary power plants are functional but their capability is strained.
- One of the secondary power plants has suffered a major disaster, resulting in an internal explosion. That compartment is now open to space, the plant is wrecked and crew assigned there are unlikely to have survived.
- The navigational situation is unknown. Sensors produce no useful data and flight controls are unpowered.

The Referee should choose one of the secondary power plants at random. It is gone, along with its section of outer hull and some neighbouring compartments. The ship has lost 2Dx5% of her remaining Hull points. There are fires in some compartments and every section of the ship has damage; seals have sprung and some parts of the ship cannot retain atmosphere. A

detailed audit when there is time will indicate myriad faults, loss or destruction of supplies and all manner of personal tragedies. For now, the Referee should present the big picture.

In addition to the hull damage, the Referee should impose 1D Defects and D3 Breakdowns from the maintenance rules on page 54 of the *Referee's Handbook*. These may or may not affect the present situation but it is absolutely imperative that the Travellers restore power and get the ship back under control.

Restoring power should be a roleplaying situation rather than a simple skill check, as it is one of the defining moments of the campaign. It is not a matter of rebooting the system or resetting cut-outs; components have burned out and sections of the power plant are in a dangerous condition. The Travellers will need to come up with a dramatic solution, such as bypassing damaged components or jury-rigging them with exotic materials. The details will require skill checks but what matters at this point is that the Travellers present a workable course of action amid the chaos.

Getting the drive back online may be complicated by casualties needing attention, confused or panicked crewmembers getting in the way or secondary problems like decompression or fires. It is conceivable that some of the creatures spawned by the infected Leviathan have remained undetected and now pose an unexpected hazard. The order of the day is the Travellers trying to restore power to their ship under conditions of complete chaos. If the Travellers roleplay the situation and come up with a good solution they should be given the opportunity to succeed. If they hope to just make it all go away with a skill check or two, the Referee should keep piling on problems until they get themselves moving.

Once power is restored, the ship's sensors, drives and controls will begin to work again – although still subject to DM-2 for the difficult conditions. Correcting the tumble is a simple matter, requiring an Average (8+) Pilot check (DEX), but the situation is dire. *Deepnight Revelation* is falling towards a singularity and is already too close to simply turn away. Even if she could, the high acceleration required to break free will send her towards other singularities until she is caught and destroyed. The answer is to plot a course using a gravitational slingshot to fling the ship out of the shell without getting close to another singularity. This requires a Difficult (10+) Astrogation check (INT) and a Difficult (10+) Pilot check (DEX). If the Effect of both comes to +6 or more, *Deepnight Revelation* emerges unscathed. Effect +1 to +5 indicates 10% of remaining Hull points are lost and another D3 Defects are gained. Negative or zero Effect results in 15% of Hull points being lost with another 5% for each point of negative Effect. In addition, the Referee should impose another Defect per point of negative Effect.

Emergence

Whatever is left of *Deepnight Revelation* staggers free of the gravitic shell. Behind her, the pattern of movement is restored as singularities change direction in an unnatural manner. If the Travellers had any doubt the shell was being consciously controlled, it is now dispelled. Ahead lies a single planet orbiting a main-sequence star. Sensor data coming in is garbled due to the shell but suggests the world is habitable. There is a singular lack of planetoids and other bodies within the shell.

Inside the inner limit of the gravitic shell there is a fair amount of electromagnetic noise but no real threat from the singularities' gravity. However, it is obvious that going out the same way will be extremely dangerous. *Deepnight Revelation* will need repairs that will take time to complete. There really is no other option than to enter orbit over the planet Terminus. Part of the crew can undertake repair work whilst the Travellers investigate the planet below. They may be surprised to note that it looks like a paradise world, with no sign of infestation by the Deepnight Entity… and there appears to be intelligent life.

The situation inside the gravitic shell is unlikely to be what the Travellers expected. There are no signals from the apparently green and pleasant world before them and no sign of the ravages an entity would inflict. They may jump to the conclusion that the shell was erected to protect Terminus from the entity and at present there is no real reason to suppose otherwise.

An assessment of the situation presents some obvious facts. *Deepnight Revelation* requires repairs as a matter of urgency and may also be short of food and supplies. Another transit of the shell is out of the question – even if the ship was in a condition to make the run, the singularities are moving erratically, which would make it impossibly risky. They are showing signs of settling but this will take an unknown time. There are no resources available except what can be found on the planet below.

If the Travellers want to attempt another run through the shell their crew will – mostly – be dead against it. Not only is this abandonment of the mission but also tantamount to suicide. The Travellers are free to insist of course, if they hold command positions, and can make the attempt. The Referee should give them fair warning in the form of a near-impossible course plot that changes as they begin their acceleration. This will require another course plot or for the ship to sheer off.

If the Travellers still proceed they will have to thread a path through, erratically moving singularities, and do it on the fly. *Deepnight Revelation* will suffer damage similar to the inward transit and may be destroyed. If she makes it in a flyable condition the Travellers can set course for home. How they fare, and whether they are deposed by the crew, is up to the Referee. This is the absolute worst outcome for the entire campaign as it shows the Deepnight Entity there is starfaring life in the galaxy. Rather than allowing the shell to decay it will work to dissipate it, enormously advancing the timeframe of its emergence.

TERMINUS

Assuming the Travellers do not turn around and make a run for it, they will have to investigate the world of Terminus. Their visit is likely to take place over a set of distinct phases; it may not be clear to the Travellers where one ends and the next begins, especially where the Deepnight Entity is hatching secret plans, but once the Travellers arrive in orbit over Terminus events will begin to move to a climax.

Initial Reconnaissance

The Travellers will more than likely begin with discreet orbital surveys and observation from a distance, followed by landings to obtain samples for analysis. Accidental encounters with the local population and wildlife are entirely possible.

Detailed Reconnaissance

The next logical step would be to land exploration parties to learn more about Terminus and investigate points of interest. That might include studying the deeroids and other creatures, searching the ancient ruins and exploring Rainshadow. The latter is likely to attract attention due to its partially intact status. The Travellers may also wish to make careful contact with the locals at this time. A small, remote settlement would be a good choice but there is nothing to stop the Travellers just landing on the plaza at The City. The expedition's experts will advise against such a reckless approach but ultimately Travellers will do as they think best.

Interactions

The Travellers can learn more about the world, its people and the Deepnight Entity through a series of interactions with the locals and the entity itself. These should be amicable – even with the entity – unless the Travellers are belligerent. The Referee should set up these interactions, after which they will play out according to the Travellers' actions.

Limited Hostility

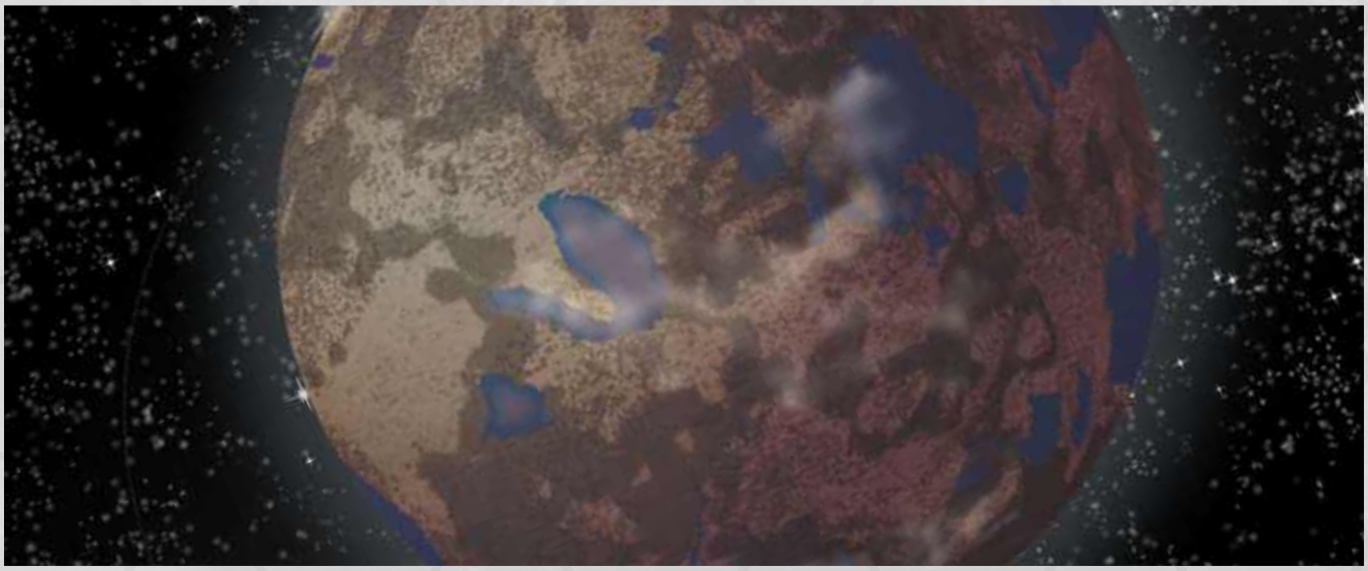
Once the entity has learned enough about the Travellers or suspects they are hostile, it will begin working towards gaining control over them and their ship. The limited hostility phase can be long or short, depending on the Travellers. If they do not escalate the situation the entity will try to be subtle, gaining advantages gradually as it prefers. If the Travellers openly oppose the entity it will rapidly move to the open hostility phase.

Open Hostility

The entity actively tries to harm or coerce the Travellers, and will harm the people of Terminus to do so, or will else use them directly. Overt attempts to infect people become common.

Endgame

The entity will go all-out to control or destroy the Travellers. At this point there is no more time for preparation; the Travellers must fight with what they have.



CHAPTER EIGHT

EXPLORING TERMINUS

The world of Terminus is detailed on page 28. The Deepnight Entity will be passive at first, seeking to learn about the Travellers and their ship, and so they are free to conduct an exploration of the planet and meet its inhabitants.

INITIAL FINDINGS

A cursory scan from orbit indicates a likely 'paradise world' with lush plant life. There are no electromagnetic emissions that would indicate a technological society but an apparent city site can be detected and it is clear from the regular arrangement of structures that intelligent life is present. Possible other sites exist but these are far less positive indications. The world has a small axial tilt, and therefore mild seasons, and its unusually circular orbit is at almost exactly the right distance for a mild, life-nurturing climate. The space scientists cannot rule out the possibility this occurred naturally – it is a big universe, after all – but the chances of encountering a world this perfect are low, to say the least.

Further investigation yields additional signs that the world has been terraformed. There is a limit to what can be ascertained about tectonic plates using orbital scanning but one thing is obvious; the position of plate boundaries and faults does not corelate to mountains and deep-crust features in the usual manner. Pushed for an explanation the science team can only suggest that mountain-building occurred according to typical processes but the crust was later rearranged. Not to an enormous degree but the result made the planetary crust more stable and less prone to activity such as volcanism and earthquakes.

Orbital mapping shows that in addition to the rampant plant life already observed there is an abundance of animal species, including huge herds of grazing creatures that wander the plains apparently at will. There are no obvious signs of infestation by an entity. There are, however, clear indications that a civilisation of some sort exists on Terminus. Most settlements seem to be small villages, clustered around a central town in a manner seen throughout inhabited space. There are occasional signs that cities once existed but these are old ruins rather than living settlements.

Two city sites are different. One is an obvious ruin but far less decayed than the other cities. It is located in the cold rainshadow desert west of a mountain range in the northerly latitudes. The other is a thriving low-tech metropolis in the temperate zone, with signs of cultivation around it and of sea links to other regions.

META-PARANOIA

A certain kind of Traveller may leap to the conclusion that Terminus is a death-trap. This is actually a reasonable line of in-game thinking, given the events of the campaign – and it is also true. However, there is a line between Travellers reasonably extrapolating that Terminus is too good to be true and assuming that the adventure plotline must be coming to a climax.

Travellers may conclude that they are the vehicle for the plot, in this case literally. They may wonder if the storyline revolves around a marvellous, perfect place ruined by the intrusion of a ship carrying a few spores of the Deepnight Entity. That would actually be quite a good story but it is not the case here – the entity is already present. However, the Travellers might decide to search and purge *Deepnight Revelation* to prevent infection of the perfect world below. This might be for good in-game reasons (to protect the people of Terminus, for example) or it could be meta-game paranoia.

If the Travellers insist on taking time out of exploration and repair operations in order to search for spores and creatures that may still be aboard, the Referee should of course let them do so. They may well find something that needs to be eradicated. This is perfectly realistic in-game; a big ship has a lot of odd corners or damaged sections of hull where an infestation could hide. It will also confirm the Travellers' meta-game suspicions. This is a good thing, since the very best Referee fake outs are the ones where the Travellers deceive themselves.

ORBITAL ACTIVITIES

By now the Travellers must be acutely aware of the need to keep their ship in working order. They probably obtained jump fuel in the Companion system and will have full tanks unless they have been damaged. If not, the only source of fuel is the planet below. Small craft

can ferry a limited quantity of water up to orbit to be cracked into hydrogen and oxygen, but will need to make a great many trips to do so. A continuous cycle of ocean-dipping operations will tie up many of *Deepnight Revelation's* craft for some time.

Repairs are another obvious requirement. *Deepnight Revelation* is the Travellers' home and only means of escape if the situation on Terminus goes bad. The Travellers may wisely order an audit of damage and prioritise specific repairs before sending personnel groundside who might be needed for the work. Forward planning, as always, will increase efficiency. If the Travellers are a bit more haphazard about this essential task the Referee may impose additional difficulties along the way.

Repairs to the ship as a whole will not be completed quickly and are likely to be ongoing throughout the visit to Terminus. Indeed, it is quite likely that *Deepnight Revelation* will still be in a poor state when the time comes to make a quick exit. The Travellers would be wise to prioritise repairs to systems that facilitate an escape, such as the jump drive, but may decide to do something else or fail entirely to plan ahead.

The gravitic shielding device has apparently been damaged in some way and is displaying highly erratic function. Without it there is no chance of penetrating the gravitic shell. It may be possible to analyse the problem and repair the device but this will take time. It is not at this point possible to say how long that will be as the technology is almost entirely unknown. If, for some reason, the Travellers neglect to assign someone to fix the device that is their only way out of the gravitic shell, crewmembers will point out that the ship cannot escape without it.

If the Travellers *still* ignore the critical repairs the Referee has a choice between assuming that someone more sensible undertook the work or leaving the systems in non-functional condition. If *Deepnight Revelation* does not have a functional jump drive and gravitic shielding device at the climax of the adventure the Travellers cannot escape Terminus. They can still win, in the sense of destroying the entity, but they cannot survive. The Referee should give the Travellers the odd reminder about the critical systems, just to be fair, but there is nothing wrong with a situation where the Travellers' own choices doom them to destruction.

The Referee should keep in mind that the crew has been in space for a long time and has suffered extremely stressful adventures. There is a beautiful, welcoming planet below and no indication an entity is present. Crewmembers want groundside liberty and fresh food, and will become increasingly restive if refused. The Travellers might allow visits to planetside settlements or instead order their people to set up a recreation camp away from the locals. Either will be acceptable to the crew but even warnings about hidden dangers will not dampen enthusiasm for groundside time.

Travellers who absolutely insist on keeping people locked up aboard ship will face plummeting morale and perhaps even theft of small craft to escape the ship. Having some of the crew stow away aboard survey and exploration craft, or make illicit landings against orders, will create a worse situation than a controlled system of liberty. In short, Travellers who try to treat their crew as machines in the hope of avoiding problems their meta-game thinking predicts will run into all manner of other issues and ultimately fail to prevent anyone from getting planetside.

It is possible that the Travellers may try to test various theories about the gravitic shell – such as whether they can jump through it – with one of the jump capable scouts. Brave volunteers might be found aboard the ship but their courage cannot alter reality. A small craft could not survive the run between singularities – *Deepnight Revelation* herself could not without the gravitic shielding device – and attempting to jump out of the shell results in a violent precipitation back into normal space about 0.1AU from the shell, after the normal duration of a jump. This causes significant damage to the craft.

With the gravitic shield device out of action and repairs necessary before the ship can go anywhere, it is obvious that the Travellers need to begin an investigation of Terminus. If they cannot repair *Deepnight Revelation* the world below will have to become their home.

GROUNDSIDE SURVEY

At some point it will be necessary to land on Terminus and begin direct exploration. For all the remote scanning and testing of samples the moment of first contact with a new world – smelling the air, touching the ground and experiencing it personally – is still an emotional experience for many crewmembers. There is always the danger of some undetected pathogen but this is countered by the excitement of meeting a new world in person.

Terminus is beautiful. Unspoiled, unpolluted; mild and temperate and teeming with life. It is the very definition of a paradise world and there are those who will fear it too good to be true. The big question is whether it is infested with the Deepnight Entity and analysis suggests

THE TERMINUS STORYLINE

It is not possible to predict how the Travellers will go about interacting with the people of Terminus and the Deepnight Entity. One group might just open fire; another may become fascinated with the many varieties of fish in the world's seas and spend a long time studying them before contacting the population. There is thus no scripted storyline. Likewise, incidents might happen to the Travellers themselves or a detachment of the crew and thus may be experienced in very different ways requiring differing levels of detail.

However, there are certain events that must occur and others that almost certainly will. The Travellers should by now be capable of looking at a situation and deciding upon a plan to deal with it. If they are struggling to come up with a course of action or need guidance, the mission's scientists and planners will suggest the following:

1. Repairs to *Deepnight Revelation* are of paramount importance, especially critical systems like power, drives and life support.
2. A general survey of the planet is needed, along with closer inspection of plant and animal life.
3. Contact should be made with the local population, ideally in a remote area where the contact team are unlikely to face large numbers if the population is hostile.
4. The ruin at Rainshadow is clearly an anomaly that should be investigated.
5. The single living city is probably the centre of governance. Visiting would best be deferred until the local language can be translated.
6. An entity may or may not be present. Analysis will determine if infection is possible; precautions must be taken until an area is declared clear.

These suggestions outline a framework for the exploration and investigation of Terminus. The mission's experts also advocate a highly cautious approach if an entity is discovered to be present. The characteristics of the entity on Terminus are clearly different to others that have been encountered, so the Travellers would be well advised to gather as much information as possible before taking actions that will result in conflict.

If these suggestions are broadly followed, the storyline will unfold in phases:

1. Initial Exploration
2. Contacting a Village
3. Exploring Rainshadow
4. Visiting The City
5. Encountering the Deepnight Entity
6. Investigation of the situation and an attempt to discern the entity's motives, as it tries to influence and subvert the Travellers and their crew
7. Escalating hostility through the Infiltration and Coercion phases
8. Final conflict between the entity and the Travellers

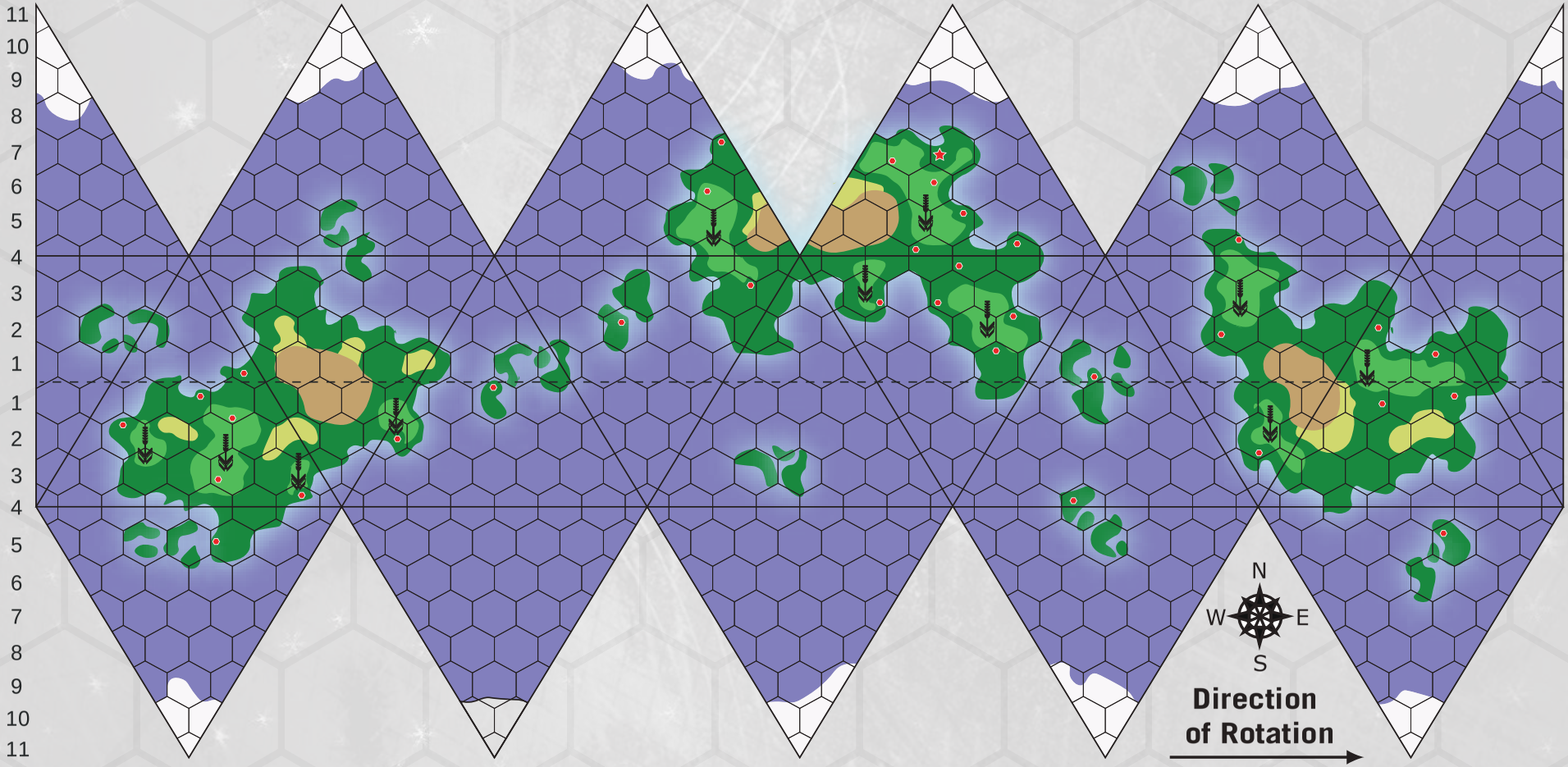
Unwise Travellers can accelerate the process and enter the final conflict with less knowledge than they need but that is a choice they make. Those who tread carefully and avoid escalation for as long as possible have the chance to learn more about the entity – which may be the key to defeating it. However, as soon as the Travellers arrive at Terminus events are set in motion, which will end with the entity making an overt attempt to seize *Deepnight Revelation.* The battle between the Travellers and the Deepnight Entity is the finale of the campaign.

it is not. The Travellers will eventually find areas that show signs of infestation but the ecosystem as a whole is clean. This may raise important questions, especially if the Travellers recall the way the Kroylos entity grew to pervade its whole environment. However, this issue will not arise until evidence is found of the entity's presence.

An initial groundside survey produces some unusual results. It seems that all life on Terminus, plant and animal, is geared to rapid reproduction and explosive growth. Plants grow back fast if cut or eaten, providing food for a large population of herbivores. This is normally found in environments with many highly aggressive predators but Terminus has few. It will take time – days at least – to build a complete picture but at that point it becomes apparent that the local ecosystem is skewed. There are enough grazers and other herbivores to keep the rampant plant life from overrunning the entire planet but with such an abundant food source and few predators there should be a lot more of them. There is no obvious reason why there are not but the most likely reason is that numbers are kept down artificially, perhaps by the planetary population.

NAME: TERMINUS POINT

UWP: X7868E7-1



City | Town/Village | Farmlands | Forests | Bare Soil | Sickly-looking Vegetation | Ice Caps

Hex Scale	World Gravity	Mean Equatorial Temp
1,000 km	0.9 g	30º

There are other things the Travellers might find strange. At night there are no stars as such but the energy released by interactions between singularities in the gravitic shell causes an effect like a distant aurora. This is usually quite dim but periods of brightness are not uncommon. Travellers might find this unsettling and beautiful in equal proportions. The nights are never completely dark as a result but the people of Terminus have never seen a star or moon.

Exploring the Ruins

There is little left of the old cities, other than Rainshadow. Most are only discernible by looking at patterns in the vegetation when observed from above. These sites can be excavated to expose the walls and streets that create those patterns and, here and there, a structure or two has survived. Investigating these reveals a low TL5 society that made limited use of fossil fuels. There is some evidence of geothermal and other renewable resources such as wind and water power, and definite signs of electricity in use. It would seem that the local population built cities that had a remarkably low environmental impact given the technologies available to them. There is no indication of why these cities were abandoned.

Encounters with the locals are only a little less likely in a ruin as anywhere else. The buried rubble results in thin soil, making the area less suitable for farming, forestry or hunting. However, work parties or hunters may be active close by and have no concerns about following game or carrying out work in a ruined area. Indeed, the ruins are of no significance at all to the local population. All that matters is the physical characteristics of the terrain, which is less suitable than the land around for most purposes.

CONTAMINATING TERMINUS

Any spores or odd bits of entity that get planetside – for example fragments stuck to the hull of a pinnace – will be sensed by the Deepnight Entity. They will act according to their nature at first, infecting and consuming whatever living tissues they can get but will then suddenly stop. This is the point where the entity gains control over the infected area. After this, the infected area will feed as little as possible to maintain its existence and is unlikely to grow or threaten anyone nearby.

The entity cannot learn anything detailed from these spores; they do not carry memories. However, they have come from outside the gravitic shell, which tells it what it needs to know, as they contain the ‘taste’ of living things not found on Terminus. For the most part this taste is weak and bitter but the entity will know there is life capable of supporting it outside the shell. This will cause it to accelerate its plans to escape its self-imposed prison.

Meeting the Locals

It is possible the Travellers will visit Rainshadow or The City and have their first contact with the people of Terminus there. An encounter at Rainshadow is likely to be fraught, at least, and quite probably violent. Visiting The City is the subject of its own section on page 24. Most of the comments here apply to both cities, although in the case of Rainshadow it may prove impossible to make peaceful contact in which case information will have to be gathered elsewhere.

The locals are curious about the Travellers and their craft but not frightened. When a vehicle rolls up or a craft lands the populace are likely to finish what they are doing in no great hurry and wander over to see what is going on. They are not foolish but have no automatic fear of strangers – nor a great deal of interest in them. Getting the herd rounded up or logs chopped is more important than whatever the new arrivals are trying to do.

The Travellers can alienate the populace very quickly by mistreating them but otherwise they are welcoming in a no-big-deal sort of way. It is not that they have ever had visitors to their planet before but they have no real reason to suppose the new arrivals are any more significant than a party of herders from the next village over offering to swap meat and leather for grain and crafted items.

There are no obvious spokespersons or leaders, although some locals will be more willing to talk to the Travellers than others. This is a matter of personal inclination as well as how busy the individual is. Of course, at first contact the Travellers have no idea what the locals' language means and their translation units will have to start from scratch. This means gestures, pantomimed actions and meaningful grunts for the most part. The locals have never met or even conceived of anyone who could not understand their language and will be in equal parts intrigued and amused by the process. It may be that the first meaningful exchange between the locals and the Travellers is mutual hilarity at their own attempts to communicate.

A standard Translation Analysis Unit (TAU) will require 2Dx30 minutes of interactions to begin the transaction process, after which it will require 1D hours to process the information. At the end of this time very basic concepts can be conveyed such as 'do you want food?' or 'don't touch that it's dangerous'. Another 2D hours of interactions and processing will result in good enough translation to permit a conversation to be held through the medium of the TAU or a personal comm in contact with it. Misunderstandings and completely garbled statements will still occur from time-to-time, but a few days of interacting with the locals will allow a comprehensive translation database to be formulated. Industrious Travellers might even learn a little of the local language.

The people of Terminus have a small yet open-minded worldview. Their experiences are very limited; few travel much beyond the local market town and fewer still have any desire to do so. Yet at the same time they are accepting of interstellar voyagers and their advanced technology. The locals cannot imagine travelling between the stars as their universe contains only one. When the Travellers speak of light years and other worlds this translates into a vague sense that the Travellers are from a town a bit like the ones the oceangoing ships voyage to, only a lot bigger and further away.

The people of Terminus are as likely to be offended as anyone else by pushy or rude Travellers, or intrusions into their homes, but if the Travellers are polite and respectful they will find the locals quite willing to talk. Typically a conversation will take place whilst doing something, such as stacking logs for firewood or preparing a meal, and the Travellers will be expected to help out rather than taking someone away from a task that needs doing. This casual acceptance of the Travellers may be interpreted many ways but in reality it comes down to the fact that the locals have a generally harmonious society and live in a world where there are few unpleasant surprises. Bad things do happen but the arrival of strangers is rarely a sign of danger. Those who live closer to Rainshadow may be a little more guarded.

Friendly questioning in the course of a conversation will yield better results than firing off a series of questions but however it is handled the locals can provide the following information and for the most part do so willingly:

The World: The people of Terminus use the same word for 'world', 'planet', 'universe' and the concept of 'everything'. As far as they are concerned the whole cosmos consists of their homeworld, the sun in its sky and the aurora at night. Ideas like 'we came from beyond the aurora' translate as 'we live really, really far away on an island nobody has discovered yet and we use odd figures of speech' or similar. The people know their world is round and have a reasonable understanding of natural science but do not care all that much about plumbing the mysteries of the universe. They have better things to do, like singing songs together as they bring in the harvest or competing at a variety of games based on common tasks.

The People: The people of Terminus have a word for themselves, which could be translated as 'us' or 'the people' or 'everyone'. They use this word to describe the Travellers and their crew – anyone who talks, wears

clothes and can learn a basic task is one of the people. Other creatures are animals of various sorts. There are distinctions regarding people from other places, or those who live in The City, but on Terminus there are three main groups – plants, animals and people. The Travellers are obviously not plants or animals, so they are grouped with the other talking, learning people of the world.

Society: Everyone is good at something, although sometimes it is something not particularly useful. Still, so long as an individual is willing to work they have a place in society and are treated with respect. There are no leaders in the formal sense; everyone knows what to do and gets on with it, and tasks are led by whoever knows how to carry them out best, so leadership roles are passed among whomever is most suitable. This is seen as a burden more than a privilege – it is much easier to do your work than guide well-meaning helpers with little idea what they are doing.

Money and Goods: Anyone who needs something should be smart enough to let others know. Someone is bound to have a needed tool or some spare food. Likewise it would be an embarrassment for someone who is good at making clothes to ignore a neighbour whose clothing is threadbare. In short, the people of Terminus prize some possessions for their usefulness, such as a well-made logging axe or fine pair of waterproof boots but materialism is alien to them. The idea of exchanging monetary tokens for items is baffling; if someone needs something why would their neighbours not ensure it is provided? If they do not need something, why would they want it?

Personal Decoration: Some people wear decorative items. This does not denote status as such but does mean someone else thought highly enough of them to give a gift, so it is reasonable to assume that someone wearing a lot of decoration has impressed friends and neighbours with skills at a necessary task or willingness to help when needed. Decorative items are admired for their craftsmanship but not desired for their own sake. Rather, they are tokens of esteem and reminders of a time when the individual's efforts were recognised. It is the admiration of others for the deeds that earned the item that matters, not the item itself.

The Ruins and Technology: The people of Terminus have always lived the way they do, except when they did not. There was a time when they chose to build great cities and light them the way the Travellers light their craft. There were flying machines and other clever inventions but the people did not like living that way and went back to their current lifestyle. Nobody really knows why but it is obvious that a technological lifestyle must have been uncomfortable or otherwise unfulfilling. The ruins are just places the people built their cities in; they are no longer wanted so have been abandoned.

Fatalism and Beliefs: The people have no concept of religion as such. There is a natural order to everything and some things are inevitable. The seasons change (a little), people get older and eventually die. Accidents and sickness happen from time-to-time. People who are careful and look out for one another can do well but ultimately everything is part of a great cycle of life. An individual who dies is not around anymore but their contributions are. The kids they taught a traditional song to are teaching their own children now; the house they helped build shelters a family. Everyone plays their part then goes but nobody is truly gone whilst the people survive.

What Happens At the End of Life? The people usually bury their dead and get together to tell stories about the individual. Their goods are shared out among those who need them. Nobody is buried with grave-goods – if the item is serviceable then someone might need it! Indeed, passing on possessions at the end of life is the last gift an individual can give and nobody really owns anything, they are just in temporary possession of a few items whilst they were needed. Sometimes an individual goes away (or 'goes to the pyramid', if the Travellers are talking to people from The City) rather than dying among their community. Often this is older people or those permanently injured but sometimes it is someone not obviously close to the end of their life. The people presume there is a reason in each case, perhaps a hidden sickness.

Cluster Sites: The people do not understand what the Travellers are saying about the Deepnight Entity but are aware of the places local wildlife sometimes enters and does not leave. People who 'go away' are known to go to these places as well, at least some of the time. It is wise to avoid them, as they are clearly associated with death but the same applies to rapids on the local river or a treacherous marsh. The people do not see these places as unnatural or intrinsically bad. Places where people and animals go to die are part of the natural order of things and have always been accepted.

The Gravitic Shell: The people have no idea what this is. They can see the aurora and know it is above the clouds but beyond that the shell is nothing more than a glow in the sky. It has always been there, part of the natural order and there has never been any reason to question it.

Rainshadow: People from settlements in the region of Rainshadow are aware of those who dwell there but do not know much about them. The folk of Rainshadow live among the ruins of an old city and lead a miserable

existence. They are paranoid and hostile, and best left alone. If motivated to consider the subject, most would surmise that the folk of Rainshadow are an example of where technological society leads and an object lesson to everyone else. Perhaps this is why the cities were abandoned; everyone became paranoid, uncooperative and just plain nasty. It is quite obvious to the people of Terminus that they are happier living the way they do and if the folk of Rainshadow want to cling to their unpleasant way of life there is nothing anyone can do about it.

The City: The City has stood for many generations. It is a pleasant place to live and unique in the whole cosmos/universe/world/planet. There are many large towns but no other place like The City. Not everyone wants to live there of course; some leave and others arrive to take their place as they choose. Individuals point out the local landmarks that matter to them – this tends to be markets and bridges, and the food warehouses on the outskirts of the city. There is a distinct lack of major public buildings. Most people can explain, in general terms at least, how food enters the city and is distributed via the canals and markets. There are no indications that the city is anything other than a clever low-tech metropolis.

The Pyramids: People living in The City and surrounding area see the pyramids every day and consider them an unremarkable part of daily life. Nobody knows when they were built, other than 'probably about the same time as The City was started, a very long time ago'. Likewise, asking how the pyramids were constructed elicits a shrug and suggestion that it involved 'lots of hard work, I guess'. Most have no idea what purpose the pyramids were built for or what function they serve and do not seem concerned that they never thought to ask. Nobody asks why the sea is there, or the forest, do they? To the average city dweller the pyramids are just there, part of the natural order as they always have been. They will not think to mention, but will not conceal, the fact that a few do visit the pyramids 'maybe because they want to' and some 'go to the pyramids' when it is their time. City dwellers can see no reason why the Travellers should not visit the pyramids and will certainly not stop them – although the vast majority of people are too busy with important tasks like making dinner to accompany a party who do want to make the trip.

The Deepnight Entity: The people of Terminus do not understand most of the things a Traveller might say about the Deepnight Entity but some will recognise a physical description. They have never heard of infection, or shamblers, and would not connect the situation on, say, Kroylos with what they know about the Dweller Under the Pyramids, as they call it. There is a living thing under there, the people know, and sometimes old folks go to it 'when it is their time'. The city dwellers have heard there are places out in the wilds where people and animals do something similar. This is something that some people do; nobody questions it for the same reason nobody is surprised when the sun rises in the morning. The people will politely listen to dire warnings about the deadly nature of the entity but

the Dweller has been there forever and does not seem to harm anyone. Questions about worshipping or serving the Dweller are met with shrugs and blank stares – the people are not conscious of the entity's telepathic influence and have no concept of worship. The Dweller is there under the pyramid, the people are here in the city, nothing is amiss and there is fresh bread baking to go with the stew.

One thing will stand out during interactions with the people of Terminus – the locals have a very small worldview and are focussed on the details of daily life to the exclusion of big questions. Last week's haybale hurling contest and the really impressive throw by the winner, is a big deal to the people of Terminus. So is a bowl of stew with friends after the day's work is done. What lies over the horizon is insignificant when they have all they need right here.

The people of Terminus are content. Their bountiful planet provides all they need, to be harvested with simple tools in a spirit of cooperation and friendship. There is joy in the companionship of others and none to be had from possession of objects. Skill and effort are rewarded with respect and admiration, and the people of Terminus crave no more than that. They do not care to push the boundaries of science or explore the unknown, nor do great deeds when small ones are just as fulfilling. The people clearly have great potential but no interest in fulfilling it. Why should they? They are happy.

To adventurers who have voyaged halfway across the spiral arm and plunged into the maelstrom of the gravitic shell, this attitude may seem small-minded and strange. The Travellers may conclude there is something unnatural about the contentment of the people of Terminus. In that, they are entirely correct.

The people of Terminus have been shaped by the Deepnight Entity and their world – which amounts to the same thing since it created the conditions that permit such cheerful complacency. On the one hand the entity has conditioned them to have little ambition, nullifying any chance of rising to greatness. On the other, almost everyone in Terminus is happy or at least content. The only group free of the entity's constant mental influence ekes out a miserable existence in Rainshadow. Which is worse – comfortable insignificance or freedom to strive and suffer? The Travellers would probably say the latter but they have not experienced the simple happiness of life on Terminus.

There is an argument for considering the Deepnight Entity as a benevolent god, which has given its subjects a paradise to live in and eliminated want. Ideally, the Travellers can be induced to at least consider this concept and question the morality of the situation. Of course, the people of Terminus are not worshippers, nor even pets. They are farm animals, completely at the mercy of the entity – and it has none. When circumstances change the entity will devour all life on Terminus and in the manner most convenient to it. Its machinations have robbed the people of Terminus of any chance to resist or even understand what is happening to them.

If the Referee plays out this segment of the adventure well the Travellers will initially come to wonder if this entity is somehow enlightened and benevolent, making its assault upon the Travellers and their new friends all the more shocking. This may be the most insidious aspect of the entity. It can emasculate the will of a whole species for its own convenience and destroy a civilised people not out of malice but simply because they are a convenient source of food. Immature versions acted on instinct but this one knows exactly what it is doing. The others were natural threats but the mature Deepnight Entity is an embodiment of evil.

YES, BUT WHERE IS THE FUNERAL PARLOUR?

There are clues to the real situation littered throughout what the people have to say but one thing will be apparent to astute Travellers – the locals do not shy away from discussing the Dweller or the places people go to die. They do not routinely mention them for the same reason a visitor to a high-end starport is not shown the mortuaries as part of a first impressions tour. Everyone is conscious of the Dweller but it has no particular significance and few really want to think about death or the disposal of bodies. This is less suspicious than a situation where people nervously change the subject or refuse to talk about the Dweller, which is not the case.

The reaction of locals to questions about the Dweller can best be compared to your own when an out-of-town visitor asks where the local crematorium is, how many graveyards your town has and what the delay is like in arranging a funeral whilst you are trying to show them the park and farmer's market. Questions about the Dweller seem odd to the locals and it will be apparent to the Travellers that conversation moves away from it naturally for lack of interest rather than a desire to conceal anything.

C H A P T E R N I N E

INTERACTIONS

It is possible that the Travellers' actions will trigger open hostility straight away but if not the entity's attitude towards them will pass through the phases described on page 13. Meaningful interactions with the people of Terminus will take place, allowing the Travellers to gain information. These are likely to take place at Rainshadow, The City and at any village or town in the surrounding countryside.

VILLAGES AND TOWNS

There is much to be learned at the smaller settlements, mostly about local society and the people of the planet. They are not hostile unless provoked and indeed will welcome the Travellers in a surprisingly matter-of-fact sort of way. To the people of Terminus everything has a place and a reason, and it rarely occurs to them to wonder what that reason might be. The arrival of funny looking strangers in a self-powered conveyance – even one that flies – is of less interest than might be expected.

Indeed, if Terminus had a future the people would probably look back on the arrival of the Travellers with their own unique perspective. They would be more concerned with how the Travellers acted and what minor personal escapades occurred than the fact that visitors came from beyond the known universe. This attitude colours all interactions with the locals; the Travellers will be immediately accepted as members of the local community if they act like they belong and nobody will care much where they came from. This means that Travellers who pitch in with whatever tasks are being carried out will find themselves treated as neighbours by people whose language they are still figuring out. This may seem odd; it is unusual to find such accepting people.

Village and town life is simple and changes little over the years. There are farms and herds in the surrounding countryside and diet is supplemented by hunting, fishing and trapping. The Travellers will be offered food alongside everyone else and may be concerned about infection. The locals will show no more than polite interest in the Travellers activities even if they start fiddling about with sampling equipment in the middle of dinner, although when a translation of the language is complete the Travellers will find they have recorded a tremendous number of variations on 'it's just stew' and 'well, you could maybe use the spoon…'

If the Travellers interact with a village or town, or are active in the countryside, they will sooner or later meet Anraxu or Klathein.

THE VILLAGER: ANRAXU

Anraxu can be encountered at any town or village, or may approach the Travellers as they make their early groundside survey. Anraxu is a rather elderly male who is not especially good at anything but is competent enough to earn respect for helping others with many tasks. He might be encountered whilst hunting, cutting logs or building a house, and is more inclined to chat than most of his fellows. The Travellers may mistake him for a leader, as he wears several decorative chains. This idea would amuse him and his fellow villagers.

Anraxu is a simple, cheerful soul who has lived a long life and is content with it. He knows it will be his time soon and he is mildly curious to see exactly what happens when someone goes to 'the place' near his village. He will even show it to the Travellers if they start asking what happens to the dead. If so, they will probably recognise the signs of infestation – slightly sickly vegetation and the occasional tendril sticking out of the ground. There are animal tracks leading to the place but none going away from it.

Attempts by the Travellers to warn Anraxu and his fellows about the entity will simply baffle them. If the Travellers attempt to destroy the local cluster it can do little about this – and will not try beyond a few token lashes with tendrils. Its long-term aim is best served by allowing the Travellers to destroy an unimportant cluster. The locals will be confused and upset by the Travellers' actions but this does not rule out further interactions.

Anraxu is quite willing to go with the Travellers as a guide and general helper. He is just a villager, with no real idea how the world works outside the daily tasks of rural life but is adaptable and willing to pitch in with almost any task. This could be hazardous if the Travellers are doing something technical, as Anraxu is likely to try to help without any clue what he is doing.

Anraxu, Helpful Villager

MALE, AGE 68

STR 7 DEX 5 END 6 INT 7 EDU 4 SOC 5
Skills: Animals (handling) 1, Jack-of-all-Trades 2, Profession (carpenter) 1, Survival 1

Weapons: Hunting Bow (1D)

THE HAULIER: KLATHEIN

Klathein is a female of middle years who operates a barge on the waterways within and around The City. She typically carries bulky goods, such as grain or cloth, but always has quantities of smaller items somewhere on her boat. The barge is propelled by a team of six of the local deeroids, plodding along the towpath in no great hurry. The barge has a crew of four multiskilled individuals who tend the animals, look after the vessel, load stock and provide additional motive power with long poles.

Klathein will be quite puzzled if anyone refers to her as a merchant. She is not a trader and does not think of herself as being involved in commerce – whatever that is. Her chosen life is as a mover of necessary items. Neither she nor anyone else owns these items; they are simply transported from where they are made or stored to where they are needed and distributed accordingly. Klathein likes the life she leads and has friends in many districts as well as the outlying towns and villages.

She voyaged aboard one of the oceangoing ships before taking up her current occupation. Klathein can tell many tales of the lands across the seas but what is striking about them is how similar everywhere seems to be. The Travellers might wonder if the stories are the product of a limited imagination but in fact Klathein is telling the truth. Society on Terminus is more or less the same everywhere except Rainshadow. She is not aware of this distinction, never having been there, but the Travellers may pick up on it.

Klathein is not willing to leave her work for more than a short period. Apart from anything else there are people depending on her – goods do not move themselves! Her focus on responsibilities and small, local tasks is typical of the population as a whole.

Klathein, Haulier
FEMALE, AGE 37

STR 8 DEX 7 END 7 INT 7 EDU 6 SOC 7
Skills: Animals (handling) 1, Navigation 1, Seafarer (personal) 2

RAINSHADOW

Travellers landing anywhere near Rainshadow, and especially in the ruin itself, will be quickly spotted. The local population will begin to shadow them, operating as individuals and small groups with no overall cooperation. The people of Rainshadow are not automatically hostile but live in a hard world where everyone is predator or prey – or a bit of both. Trust is hard earned and easily destroyed.

The folk of Rainshadow will fight only if they have to but may be willing to ambush a crewmember to take supplies. Covert theft is preferred but they will rob unwary Travellers if they think the odds are good. There is no compunction about killing someone for weapons or equipment but anyone part of a group may have relatives or friends who will try to take revenge – or just get their gear back. This is how the locals think; killing someone to steal their goods is just hunting and the locals live by hunting. However, a killing or robbery can lead to other problems so the reward must be high. Otherwise, they will settle for driving off intruders if their territory or possessions are threatened and steal whatever they can.

If the Travellers are aggressive, their exploration of Rainshadow may become a nightmare of shots and arrows from the undergrowth or high buildings, with traps and snares concealed at ground level. Most are of basic construction and likely to be a painful nuisance rather than life-threatening. These include small pits with spikes to impale a foot, springy branches with spikes that lash a passer-by when triggered and similar hazards. The locals know of places where the ground is unsafe due to partial structures making a concealed hollow underneath and areas where a wall could be pushed onto anyone passing through the clear area below. If they can, the locals will try to lure or channel Travellers into these areas. Ideally, they will kill or disable some of the intruders and drive the rest off, allowing casualties to be looted before going after the others. Rainshadow dwellers are likely to figure out how to use advanced firearms as they are familiar with the basic concepts.

If the Travellers are patient and clever they can make peaceful contact. One way to achieve this is to move into the open and stop, placing items on the ground as if laying them out for inspection. Unlike everyone else on Terminus the people of Rainshadow do trade and can recognise an invitation to exchange goods. Their likely approach is by a small party, some of whom will hold up what they bring to trade whilst others blatantly brandish their weapons before retiring to positions of cover.

The locals have very little to trade. Animal skins or preserved meat, small cakes made of fruit and nuts, a modest quantity of black powder, tools and weapons – some of them broken – and machinery components will all be laid out for display. The folk will inspect what the Travellers have on offer and indicate what they want. This may include items carried by Travellers.

Negotiations will be difficult if the Travellers have not yet translated the local language but it should be possible to indicate ‘this for that and that’ with gestures and affirmative noises. The locals will be suspicious of a bargain that looks too generous; they are surprisingly fair-minded. This is largely because those who feel they have been cheated in a trade tend to respond with extreme violence. They can be won over by what they feel are fair bargains for things they want in exchange for items they believe are of equivalent value. The Travellers may not think a deeroid-hide coat and moccasins, plus an antler-hilted knife with a steel blade repurposed from some piece of old machinery is valuable but to the people of Rainshadow possession of such things can be a matter of life and death.

The locals will be very puzzled and a bit alarmed if the Travellers cannot speak their language – even if it is translated by a device. They warily accept this, since they know they are different from the rest of the people on Terminus but any Traveller who manages to say something meaningful in the local language will be esteemed more highly than those who cannot.

Whether by trade or other means, the Travellers will eventually come into contact with a local hunter named Yavni. She is both bolder than most others and also more cautious. The risks she takes are carefully calculated and she is always ready to strike a telling blow then vanish into the undergrowth. However, she is also curious about the new arrivals and the equipment they carry. The similarities between the relics of Rainshadow and the Travellers’ equipment are not lost on her, which inclines her to believe – not entirely incorrectly – that her people may have more in common with the Travellers than the rest of the planetary population.

THE RAINSHADOW HUNTER: YAVNI

Yavni is typical of females dwelling in Rainshadow; underfed and small for her years but tough and wiry. Earning her trust will not be easy but she is more amenable to friendly contact than most of her peers. She makes her living mainly from hunting and trapping small game, along with scavenging useful items to trade to her neighbours. Unlike others on Terminus, the folk of Rainshadow understand the concept of trade. Nobody gives anything away and community spirit is limited to close family only.

Yavni knows tales of the city she inhabits, passed down as oral histories. They tell of a time of peace and calm before the other cities came and of the rapid invention of wonders. It may at first sound like Yavni is speaking of overnight advancement to a very high technological level, and the construction of cities in a matter of days, but this is just the garbled memory of an oral tradition. In fact she is referring to a quick but not exceptional climb to around TL5. She speaks of flying machines and self-powered vehicles and of an age of technological marvels.

According to Yavni's stories, the people of Terminus just gave up on their cities and abandoned them, returning to a simple life as farmers and hunters more or less overnight. This is factual, although Yavni's tales do not offer an explanation. The stories then speak of a decline at Rainshadow, which needed the support of other cities to thrive.

Gradually the city fell into disrepair and the citizens struggled to survive as best they could. Those that left were never heard from again and everyone knows that if you go far enough south you do not come back. This is a reference to the fact that the Deepnight Entity does not care about miserable remnants struggling to survive in the cold wastes around Rainshadow but those who move into an area it does care about – somewhere with more abundant life – slowly come under its mental compulsion and drift into mainstream society.

Yavni is an accomplished hunter and well respected – or feared – among the other Rainshadow dwellers. If the Travellers can win her over somehow she will be able to bring more of her people over to their side. Indeed, she might be the key to the survival of her species – the Travellers may be able to save some of the people of Rainshadow when the entity turns against every living thing in its domain.

Yavni, Rainshadow Hunter
FEMALE, AGE 24

STR 5 DEX A END 8 INT 5 EDU 2 SOC 2
Skills: Gun Combat (slug) 2, Survival 2

Weapons: Black Powder Rifle (3D)

THE CITY

Sooner or later the Travellers will visit The City. There, as with everywhere but Rainshadow, the Travellers will be met with a curiously uninterested reception. People are civil and even friendly in a distant sort of way, offering waves of greeting as they pass without taking much interest unless the Travellers do something outrageous. If the Travellers were to overhear an interaction between locals at the moment they sweep into the city, it would be along the lines of:

'Oh look, newcomers. Funny-looking lot. Nice shoes though, I wonder who made them? Maybe they've got some spares they don't need right now. I could use some good waterproof footwear. Anyway, did you see that barge loader fall into the docks yesterday?'

Unless the Travellers launch an attack, their arrival will be a non-event of enormous proportions. This should intrigue the Travellers. They are free to wander around the city and ask questions or do more or less as they please so long as they are respectful of homes and do not make a nuisance of themselves. The City folk recognise weapons but simply do not care that the Travellers are carrying them – there is always a reason for everything, after all.

First impressions of The City are that it is marvellously well run yet nobody seems to be in charge. The pyramids at the edge of the city are not a governmental complex as far as anyone can tell and there seems to be a complete lack of public buildings other than food storage warehouses. Statements like 'take me to your leader' elicit only confusion.

The Travellers will also note how clean the city is. This is in part to a habit of cleaning up after themselves that everyone seems to share but if the Travellers look deeper they will find that the water of the canals is very clean – far cleaner than they would expect. The locals have no explanation for this and do not consider there to be anything unusual about it. Waste goes in the sewer and is gone; there is nothing more to it than that.

If the Travellers seek a sewer outfall they can find several running into the canals, which should be surrounded by an area of rather nasty water. There is a slightly higher rate of biological waste matter in the outfall water but nothing like what would be expected. Persistent testing will eventually find traces of Deepnight Entity tissues in the water but they are dead and inert, something not encountered before. If the Travellers are really keen to plumb the mysteries of the sewers they might enter one and dive into the murky depths. There they will find the answer – the whole city is criss-crossed with a network of live and active tendrils (or roots) with the occasional small cluster at nexus points. These seem to be stripping biological waste out of the sewer water – and also the well water if the Travellers think to check there.

It is clear from this that the Deepnight Entity has the capability to infect the whole city at any time it chooses and has had that capability for as long as the city has stood. Yet nobody is infected and the entity seems content to filter biological matter out of the sewers rather than feed on the population. Roots can also be found leading into food warehouses but again rather than infecting the city through the creature seems content to absorb the contents of a grain warehouse from time-to-time without harming anyone.

If the Travellers spend any time in The City they will encounter Ul Ain, a young local who can explain how The City runs.

LEARNING CURVE

Early interactions with the people of Terminus can go on for as long as the Referee feels appropriate. The entity will be passive during this time. That is not to say it is not analysing or planning but it will not act against the Travellers even if they destroy a minor cluster or two. This segment of the adventure is freeform, with the Travellers doing what they think best with little interference.

This does not rule out all manner of other adventures. Crewmembers might go missing, causing grave alarm, only to turn up safe after enjoying some illicit shore leave. Others may get themselves into trouble on an exploration mission or dangerous repair job. The Travellers may have to split their attention between investigating the world of Terminus and dealing with problems occurring on *Deepnight Revelation*.

It is quite possible that the Travellers will fall into a comfortable rhythm and perhaps begin to focus on what they intend to do, on their own time frame, so they are caught by surprise when the Deepnight Entity begins its attempt to conquer their ship.

THE TOWNSMAN: UL AIN

Ul Ain is a young male from The City. He lives close to the pyramids and does odd jobs for folk who live near him. He can often be encountered in the local market, running errands or helping out. Once he understands their confusion, Ul Ain can explain better than most that there is no medium of exchange in the 'market' and no commerce as the Travellers understand it. What happens is that anyone who has something they do not need – including their time – takes it to the market in case someone else has need of it. People present themselves and are given work to do whilst others wander around asking if anyone has a tool they need. Food is distributed at the market, on a 'take-what-you-need' basis. There are always stands where you can get something to eat, just there for the taking, as well as stalls offering ingredients for home cooking.

Ul Ain sometimes runs errands up to the pyramids. This is quite a climb and he has been gifted with several decorative chains in recognition of his speed and diligence. To the best of his knowledge, food is never taken to the pyramids, only tools and equipment used in maintaining them. Ul Ain is sure he has not seen all the chambers inside but the ones he has been in are quite extensive. There is always work going on in the upper chambers, mainly to remove stones that have become chipped and replace them. Occasionally, a major piece of remodelling takes place, with walls removed to create larger chambers or added to subdivide one. Ul Ain has no idea why these works are carried out – he is a market runner, not a pyramid stonemason – but is familiar with some of the workmen who carry out these tasks. If the Travellers ask them, they tend to respond that 'it needs to be done' although they do not seem to know exactly why or how they know what is needed.

Ul Ain can relate many tales of life in The City and like those of other people on Terminus they are staggeringly mundane. There are no great events in the sense of war, earthquake, famine or revolution. Instead, he tells of incidents at the marketplace, spills from transport barges and similar much more personal events. It is as if The City has no history as such, just the gossip of neighbours. His accounts are true; Terminus has a very harmonious society in a gentle and comfortable environment.

Ul Ain, Market Runner
MALE, AGE 16

STR 4 DEX 9 END A INT 6 EDU 4 SOC 5
Skills: Athletics (endurance) 1

C H A P T E R T E N

ESCALATION

If the exploration of Terminus and interactions with the people there is played out well by the Referee, the Travellers will not notice the gradual escalation by the entity. Its first gambit is to try to win them over and make them voluntary or semi-voluntary servants. It has achieved this over centuries of conditioning with the people of Terminus and learned that its interests are best served by simply implanting a telepathic suggestion of what it wants in the mind of someone who sees no reason not to obey. This frees the entity from having to micromanage small tasks and has proven more efficient than direct control.

The entity does not understand the motivations of the Travellers and will view their actions in the context of what the locals do. This can lead to blind spots regarding activities and the entity will not recognise some technologies until they are used. It will thus tread carefully but is entirely willing to allow Travellers to enter the chambers under the three pyramids in The City and approach its central mass. It will communicate with them – ideally by way of telepathic imagery but if necessary by placing that imagery in the mind of a local person and having them interpret. The latter could be quite bizarre or even comical, as Travellers and entity try to communicate through someone who does not understand any of what is going on.

AN AUDIENCE WITH THE DWELLER

Telepathic Travellers or infectees will feel a 'pull' towards the pyramids and quickly become aware that an entity dwells beneath. There is something very different about this one although. In addition to being more powerful, its mind also feels different. There is a sense of hunger but no raw single-minded instinct. The entity does not feel malevolent; those who experience the pull will become convinced that, in some fashion, it wants to talk.

This is entirely true and Travellers who enter the pyramids or any other cluster site will not be opposed. If they enter the pyramids in The City the Travellers will pass through a series of chambers, descending staircases to reach lower levels. Light is provided by gently glowing ceilings and walls, revealing intricate carvings. Some are abstract but rather pleasing. Others are breathtakingly detailed, depicting The City and its inhabitants going about their normal business with the pyramids in the background.

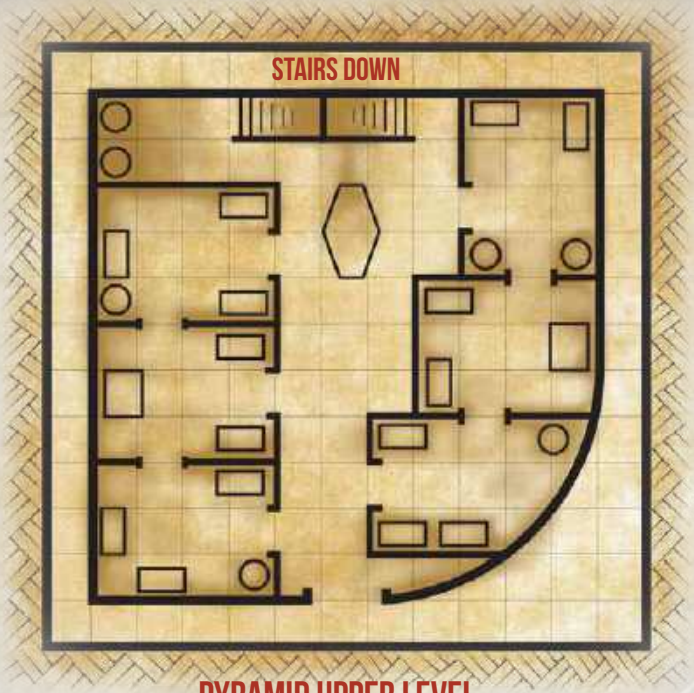
The Deepnight Entity does not consider itself a god – although it might if it were familiar with the concept – but has a temple all the same.

The Travellers will meet workmen sweeping up dust or chiselling a new design into the walls. They are cheerful, friendly and, most of all, uninfected. None have seen shamblers or similar creatures, although some are aware of what dwells in the very bottom of the pyramid. It is the Dweller, they say, and it has always been there. They are not aware of it ever doing anyone any harm, although equally they are also aware that some people go to the pyramids 'when it is their time'. This does not strike anyone as a contradiction; if the Dweller digests the bodies of those who die in the pyramid, that is no different to putting them in the ground to slowly decompose.

The descent through the pyramid is long and tiring, and not just a little nerve-wracking. When the Travellers finally emerge they find themselves in a huge chamber supported by impossibly thin columns. This is the same in all three pyramids; each houses a gigantic cluster of the Deepnight Entity's tissues. There are thick tendrils coiled around the pillars and across the ceiling, moving as if in a directionless wind but they do not attack the Travellers. There are no shamblers in sight when the Travellers first arrive; there are always a few but they are concealed in side chambers and within the tangled tendrils of the cluster.

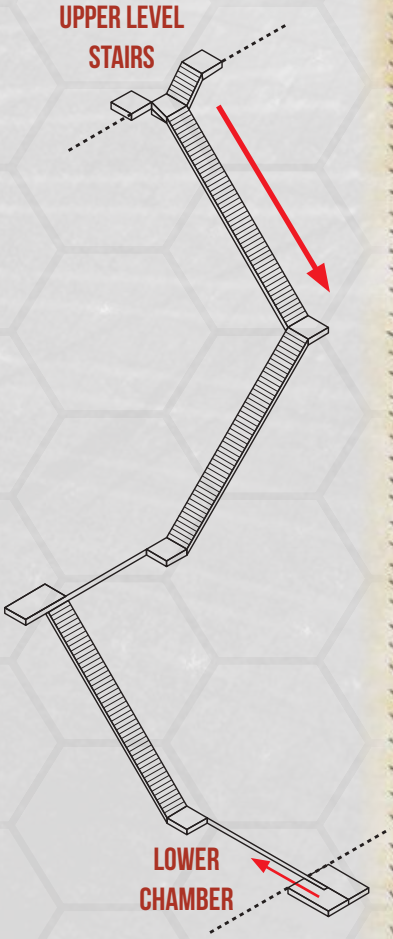
The entity does not believe the Travellers can significantly harm it, unless they have already demonstrated that capability. Mere explosives and hand weapons, even plasma guns, do not concern it. If the Travellers have used a nuclear demolition charge or something similarly destructive the entity will be more worried but even then it is willing to risk one of its major clusters in the hope of obtaining cooperation.

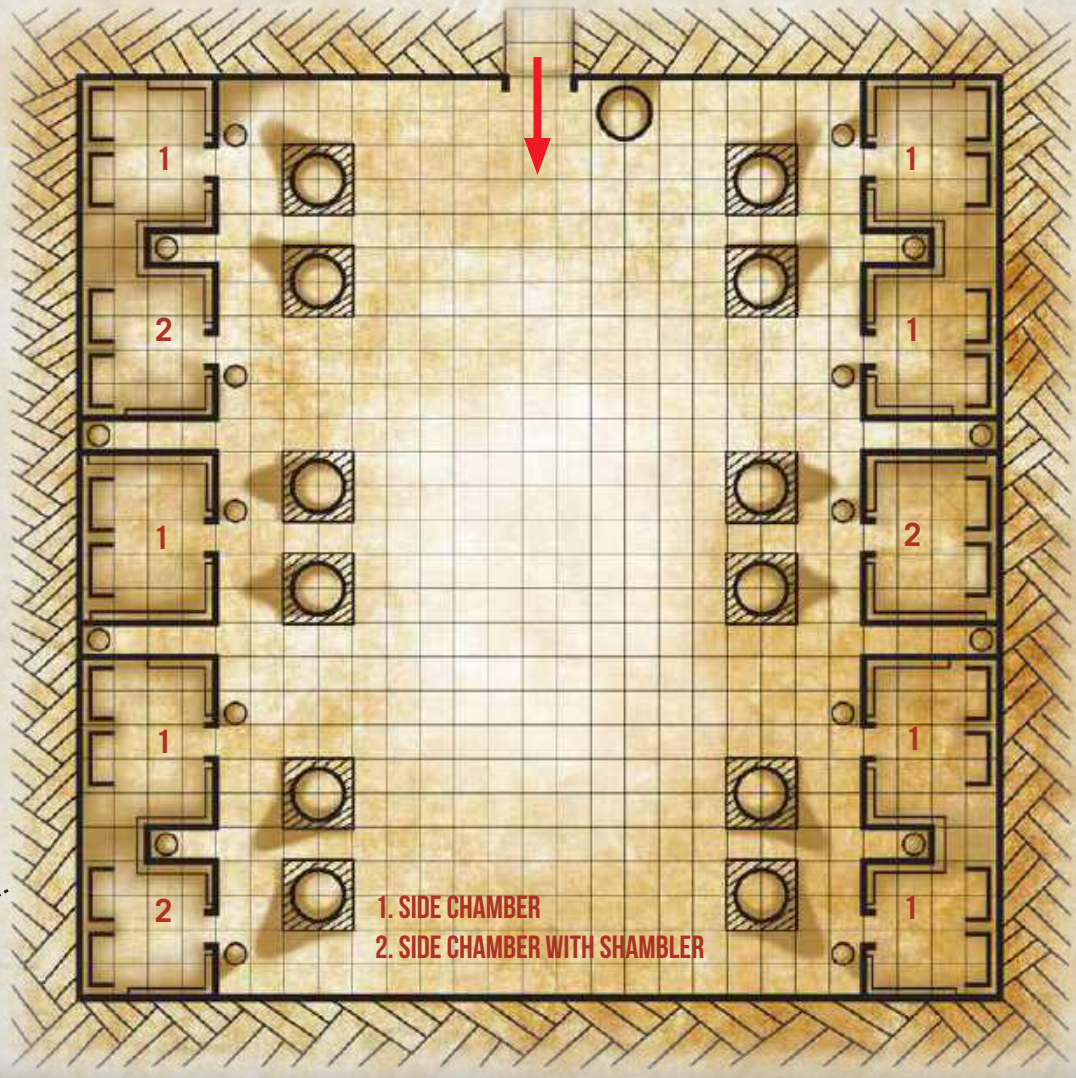
Even those not normally sensitive to telepathy will receive impressions from the entity. It feels tremendous hunger but there is an icy discipline to its mind, which controls or suppresses its urge to feed. It also projects a curiously calm emotion towards any Traveller trying to hurt it, which can best be summed up as a feeling that 'it is desirable that you desist'. It is quite possible that the Travellers will be blasting away with plasma guns when they suddenly realise the entity is not merely unresisting, it is doing nothing more than politely asking them to stop shooting it.



PYRAMID UPPER LEVEL

PYRAMID LOWER CHAMBER





The entity will tolerate the complete destruction of a major cluster, although if the Travellers move on to another it will defend itself with all means at its disposal. Fair warning will be issued, in the form of a telepathic feeling of 'desirable you stop/you will be destroyed', which alternates between gentle and calm, and overwhelmingly terrifying. It is quite possible the emotions will be mixed, with a request to cease attacking it delivered as a horrific, stomach-wrenching threat followed by a polite and quiet assertion of impending destruction.

If the Travellers attempt to interact with the entity it will make no attempt to harm or infect them during this first audience. Instead it tells its story (see page 11) through telepathic and visual images. The entity is not exactly creating these images; instead it is implanting an idea of what it wants the Travellers to see and believe, and their imagination will create the details. This is not so very different to the way the Droyne telepathic carvings work.

The entity might tell its story even whilst the Travellers are trying to blast it to pieces. It is possible the Travellers will come to the realisation halfway through their stock of hyperbaric charges that they are blowing chunks out of a gentle god that is trying to show them the wonders of the universe. This impression is not quite accurate of course but the Referee should try to convince the Travellers there is something very special about this creature – and that it is not their enemy.

The impression the Travellers get from this audience is what the entity wants them to believe. The version of events it wants them to perceive is simple: it locked itself away because otherwise it would have consumed all life in the young galaxy. It nurtured life here on Terminus and altered the planet to make it pleasant to live on. It does not harm the people of Terminus and has learned to control its urge to feed. This is partially true but not the whole story; at some point a Traveller will realise the entity's motives were not benevolent. Terminus is a survival capsule, to be used until there is enough life in the galaxy that the entity can feed without exhausting its supply of organic matter… and the Travellers are proof that this is now the case.

A DEAL WITH THE DWELLER

The first gambit used by the Deepnight Entity is what amounts to bribery. It does not understand what the Travellers want but does not need to. All the entity needs is to implant the idea that 'you will get what you want' and the crewmember's imagination will supply the details. It may be that some will want material things like money or status upon returning home, others may want to get one over on a rival or win the heart of a colleague. Some may become convinced that releasing the entity is a good idea; it could bring harmony and prosperity to whole worlds, modifying them to create a paradise for the inhabitants. A sufficiently powerful entity could tame the chaos of the universe and grant its allies enormous power to do good.

The deal is particularly insidious because it does not come from the entity; it comes from the Travellers' own soul. All the entity does is offer 'what you want' in return for helping it. A self-centred individual will come up with a selfish reward; a good person will see ways to help others. The Travellers and anyone who goes close to the entity will receive the first offer. All the entity wants is to be conveyed to another world with life and in return it will give the Travellers whatever they desire.

It is possible the Travellers may fall for this, especially if they desire to learn the secrets of the entity's psionic powers or otherwise attain greater power. More likely the Travellers will consider the deal questionable at best. They may not initially realise that others have been made an offer too. Any member of the crew within a few kilometres of a cluster – which essentially means anywhere on the planet – can be contacted by the entity. Most will be either too fearful – as a result of the encounters they have already had – or possess sufficient common sense to realise this is a deal with the devil.

However, there will always be those who are weak, foolish, greedy or just caught at a low point when they are looking for purpose. The entity will be able to persuade *someone* to work with it. The Travellers may perceive warning signs when normally sensible scientists start advocating the possibility of a limited introduction to a suitable host world to allow study or to trade relocation for secrets the entity has unlocked. Crewmembers may report their fellows suddenly opening what-if discussions about the wonders the entity could show them or psionic techniques it could teach.

If the Travellers heed these warning signs they may be able to prevent someone from doing something stupid. Their efforts will be hampered by the fact that absolutely anyone might have been swayed, including those charged with preventing others from bringing infected material aboard. However, whilst the offer was insidious it was also rather clumsy. Those who bought into the entity's offer are now genuinely convinced of the benefits. If another crewmember wants to talk about it, those who have been swayed will not see any reason to keep it secret and reveal themselves to the most basic of questioning. They can then be talked round or locked out of sensitive systems like biological screening equipment.

This incident should provoke paranoia among the crew and may lead to internal conflict but it will seem easy enough to head off. However, some of those influenced have been more deeply or subtly affected. A survey team is persuaded to bring samples of the entity's tissues aboard *Deepnight Revelation* and establish them somewhere they can find food such as a ration locker or one of the biosphere units. Once a small cluster has grown this brings the ship within range of telepathic influence, allowing more crewmembers to be won over. If that fails, the entity will resort to infection.

Good security measures, put in place promptly and firmly, will head off this problem. If the Travellers fail to act in time some well-meaning crewmembers will sow the seeds of destruction aboard *Deepnight Revelation*. It will take time for the spores to grow, so the effects will not be immediately apparent. The Referee should note that the crewmembers have not turned on their comrades; they are concealing their actions because they know others 'would not understand' but will 'surely see the benefits' when the plan comes to fruition. Crewmembers involved in this betrayal will – mostly – be mortified at what they have done and reveal infected areas or try to cleanse them. This may lead to secondary problems as crewmembers steal hazmat suits and try to purge a compartment without letting anyone else realise what is happening.

If this attempt to gain cooperation does not work the Deepnight Entity becomes hostile towards the Travellers and their crew. It will not immediately make this apparent unless there seems to be something to gain from the threat. Instead, it will commence increasingly blatant attempts to infect or otherwise gain control of the Travellers. Any attempt to re-enter the pyramids or approach a cluster elsewhere will meet with resistance.

INFILTRATION

If the deal does not work, the entity reverts to more straightforward means. It will try to infect crewmembers wherever it can or infect locals and use them against the Travellers. Its aim here is to get as much of its tissue aboard *Deepnight Revelation* as possible. The first attempt is insidious; the entity directs the people of a settlement or part of The City to supply food to *Deepnight Revelation* but to conceal spores within the shipment.

The way it goes about this is to infect some or all of the people in a settlement and compel them to come into contact with the crew of *Deepnight Revelation*. It is hoping to infect enough crew to stage a takeover of the ship and will make no attempt to be subtle. Those infected are directed to get back aboard the ship and infect others among the crew.

Under Attack

The Travellers may spot something is amiss when villagers or townsfolk they have come to know start approaching them with unusual purpose. A successful Average (8+) Recon or Streetwise check is sufficient for a Traveller to recognise hostile intent and/or the early symptoms of infection. Not all hostiles are infected; many have simply been directed to attack the Travellers and crew. However, the intent is the same in each case; Travellers are to be immobilised for infection rather than killed outright.

The Travellers may or may not hesitate to open fire on people who up until now have been gentle friends. They will find themselves under attack from small groups, who try to grab and hold them for one or two infected individuals to bite or scratch. Avoiding being grabbed requires an Average (8+) Athletics (dexterity) check with DM-2 per individual after the first attempting to grab the Traveller, to a maximum of DM-6. Anyone grabbed will be approached by an infected local, who will take D3 rounds to reach them. Each round the Traveller may attempt to break free.

A Difficult (10+) STR or Melee (unarmed) check is required to break free of the crowd, with DM-2 per additional person holding the Traveller to a maximum of DM-6. It would be possible to kill the infected person but others will arrive within moments.

The Travellers may note a few details, all of which are unsettling. The infected assailants are not interested in attacking those who are not infected, only the Travellers and crew. Those not infected attack without regard to their safety. They do not dodge or take cover; they simply rush at the Travellers and try to hold them. They will not even try to disarm a victim; it is quite possible that a Traveller will be able to shoot incoming infectees, even whilst held, and also gun down people holding them – who make no attempt to stop the shots. Having to do this to people they know might be traumatic for some Travellers.

Reports of Trouble

Assuming they manage to fight free of the initial attack, the Travellers receive reports that parties elsewhere on Terminus have also come under attack. Some crewmembers are missing, others are known to be down. Panicky requests for orders come in. Some parties have opened fire, others are reluctant to harm their new friends. Everyone is looking to the Travellers for guidance.

Whatever the moral situation may be, *Deepnight Revelation* is under heavy attack from an enemy that will stop at nothing to get infectees aboard. Any

party that does not respond with decisive violence or a precipitate flight will inevitably be overrun. The Travellers will need to coordinate a rescue of those exploration parties that did not have a craft with them at the time of the attack and there is an added complication. One of the craft pilots is infected and has made a suspicious landing in an area close to a minor cluster. He has taken aboard a few infected deeroids and is now headed for *Deepnight Revelation*.

The crew are understandably reluctant to fire on one of their own but if they do not the craft will dock and disgorge infected animals into the hangar. This might require extreme measures to deal with and could result in secondary infections.

The Battle for Deepnight Revelation

Deepnight Revelation is under attack from multiple directions, although how many depends to some extent on what the Travellers have done. The worst case scenario includes all of the following:

- Infected crewmembers armed with weapons they took planetside
- Infected locals brought aboard by infected pinnace or boat crews
- A mob of infected deeroids
- Additional infected crew as a result of earlier infiltration
- Infected creatures hiding since the fight at the Leviathan's nest
- Crewmembers telepathically 'nudged' to attack one another

The latter is only possible if the entity has a cluster aboard. If the Travellers were able to prevent this happening, they will only have to contend with physical threats. The fight can be abstracted or used as a backdrop to the Travellers' actions if the Referee pleases. Alternatively, the deckplans of *Deepnight Revelation* can be used as a strategic map as the surviving crew struggle to regain control over their ship.

The fight should be vicious and desperate, and above all confused. The Travellers might be in the thick of it or trapped groundside. Ideally, the infiltration should begin when the Travellers are at The City but their choices may make this impossible. If the Travellers *are* at The City, they face an additional problem; whilst they are trying to coordinate the defence of their ship and figure out what is going on, the entire population of The City turns against them. The entity simply makes it known that it wants the Travellers dead or infected and the locals do their utmost to make it happen. The Travellers may be involved in a running fight with thousands of hostiles whilst their crew battle it out in orbit.

The Pyramids

Once the entity has become openly hostile it will use its telekinesis to collapse the entry tunnels into the pyramids. The Travellers will not be able to gain entry without extensive excavation, which is impossible whilst the population of The City are trying to kill them. The pyramids continue to heave, crack and tremble once the passages are closed and there are tremors throughout The City. These do not feel like earthquakes; this is something else – like the movement of giant tendrils under the ground.

COERCION

As the battle for *Deepnight Revelation* winds down and the entity realises it has lost, it launches one final attempt to gain control over the ship. An overwhelming telepathic image is sent out, one of hunger and want… for the ship. It is repeated at intervals and before each the entity commits an act of destruction.

Vegetation around a countryside cluster begins to wither and die. A herd of deeroids changes direction and begins running headlong towards the cluster. Some drop dead from exhaustion. The rest plunge into the cluster and are consumed, after which a spreading circle of death can be seen expanding out from the site, with lines where underground roots link to other clusters.

At sea, monstrous tendrils reach up from the shallows and pull vessels down to the seabed, whilst millions of fish swim headlong towards the nearest clusters to be consumed. On land, a whole village marches relentlessly to the nearest cluster and are taken, tendrils now pushing out of the ground and waving in the air.

The pyramids collapse, then the rubble is flung outward in a telepathic paroxysm. The population of The City – people the Travellers may know – start marching mindlessly towards the great clusters. Tendrils roil the waters of the canals and snake across the docks to seek more victims.

At each turn the demand is repeated: *THE SHIP*. The entity wants the ship and it is making it clear it will kill everything on Terminus if it is not surrendered.

Controlled Locals

STR 7 DEX 6 END 7 INT 2 EDU 2 SOC 2
Skills: Melee (bludgeon) 1

Weapons: Improvised (2D-2) or Knife (1D+2)

SURVIVING THE BATTLE OF TERMINUS

There *is* no battle of Terminus. The Travellers cannot win this fight in the sense of defeating their enemies. All they can do is survive and retreat to their ship, perhaps returning to the surface to make the odd raid or rescue someone who has not yet been infected. Anyone left on the surface will be consumed or killed sooner or later.

The Entity will turn the entire planetary population – other than the people of Rainshadow – against the Travellers, along with every animal that can make a meaningful attack. Those not being flung in wave assaults at the Travellers and their crew are consumed by the entity to fuel its power. The Travellers may find themselves gunning down friends in self-defence but there is no alternative. As mentioned before, this is true evil – the entity knows nothing of malice, only expediency. It does what it wishes with no regard to any other living thing, because every other living thing in the universe is simply a source of food.

Every plant, person and creature on Terminus is doomed once the entity turns hostile. If the Travellers choose to save someone they will have to be sedated or overpowered and forcibly brought to *Deepnight Revelation.* Those not confined will attempt to rampage through the ship. Locking them in compartments or perhaps using low berths to put them out of action will suffice to contain these individuals and unaffected people from Rainshadow will actively help the Travellers.

When the Deepnight Entity is destroyed its ability to implant suggestions is obviously curtailed but those who were sent against the Travellers are still subject to the commands they received. However, such violence goes against the gentle nature of the people of Terminus and it will be possible to carefully return them to normal – assuming they and some of the mission's social scientists survive.

These evacuees and survivors will have to come to terms with the fact their species is now all but extinct at the hands of the Travellers, although the blame can be more rightly placed upon the Deepnight Entity. Unravelling this problem is a task for the future… assuming *Deepnight Revelation* and her crew have one.

SHAMBLERS

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Shambler	25	3m
SKILLS	Melee (Bludgeon) 1	
ATTACKS	Club (2D) or Arms (1D)	
TRAITS	—	
BEHAVIOUR	Mindless	

THICK TENDRILS

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Tendril	12	—
SKILLS	None	
ATTACKS	Swipe (2D) or Grab (1D per round after first)	
TRAITS	—	
BEHAVIOUR	Mindless	

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE EXTINCTION OF ALL LIFE

The Travellers might actually consider surrendering *Deepnight Revelation* but ultimately they will not get the choice. The Deepnight Entity is out of control now. It has abandoned millennia of self-control and is consuming plant and animal life at an incredible rate to fuel its lust for the ship. The Travellers can see spreading circles of dead plant life, hordes of animals rushing to their deaths and the people of Terminus marching to their deaths. The Travellers may recall the local philosophy that nobody is really gone whilst the species continues but before their eyes the gentle people of Terminus are becoming extinct.

The exception is Rainshadow. The folk there are unaffected but will perish along with everything else if the entity consumes the entire ecosystem. It might be possible to stage a rescue of them, perhaps along with friends from some of the villages or stranded crewmembers. These rescues are highly dangerous as the entity will attack anyone landing on Terminus with everything at its disposal. It has, however, made a mistake.

When the entity collapsed the pyramids it removed their protection. The largest nuclear demolition charges are sufficient to kill the great clusters of the unprotected entity – although they will also eradicate The City and everything around it. Any attempt to place the charges will be met with vigorous attacks by controlled locals and tendrils bursting out of the ground but these are attacks on the Travellers rather than attempts to defend. Until the bombs go off the entity is not concerned about them – it just wants to kill or infect the crew of *Deepnight Revelation*.

If the Travellers attempt to place charges or rescue people, they will have to fend off a never-ending wave of attacks intended to kill or infect them. This is not a fight they can win with the firepower of personal weapons, although it might be possible to create a mass-kill zone using hyperbaric charges or some similar means, which would buy some time until reinforcements arrive. The Referee should throw endless waves of berserk locals armed with improvised weapons at the Travellers, along with infected deeroids and attacks by large tendrils. The latter are thick and powerful enough to inflict serious harm and will strike to kill.

A Traveller attacked by a large tendril will be hit by a swipe on 8+ or grabbed on 10+. A swipe does 2D damage; a grab does no damage the first round but 1D thereafter by constriction, ignoring armour unless it is a whole suit of rigid plates such as combat armour. A Traveller can break free of a tendril with an Average (8+) STR or Melee check but takes damage that round from constriction.

If the Travellers have significant firepower they may be able to mow down hordes of locals – who are innocent people controlled by the entity. This is not a 'fight scene' so much as the backdrop to an attempt to take out the entity. If the Travellers like a good fight the Referee can make more of this by having a few locals sneak up close and make a dash for the Travellers, or a tendril burst up through the ground right among them. However, this is a scene more about drama than dice rolls. The Travellers cannot win (or achieve anything meaningful) by shooting locals. All they can do is make space to escape, plant a bomb or take some other meaningful action.

The Referee should make much of the horror of this situation. The Travellers' security detail may hesitate to shoot someone who was a friend an hour ago and be pulled down and torn to pieces in front of them… or a tendril may knock someone down and drag them into the sewers, to be consumed at the entity's leisure. The overall mood is one of desperation and chaos, and it should quickly become apparent the Travellers cannot win this fight. However, if they have a plan to attack the entity, such as planting one of the demolition charges close to it, they may be able to carry this out.

Even nuking The City does not stop the entity. Its great clusters can be destroyed but it has so much mass elsewhere that its abilities are scarcely diminished. Any attempt to evacuate personnel or friends from the surface or launch a ground attack are made against the backdrop of a new capability – the entity begins using its telekinesis to rip the tops off mountains, flinging them at ships and craft in orbit as it tries to pull *Deepnight Revelation* down with sheer telekinetic force. The ship can resist the pull if a skilled pilot is at the helm but every time she is forced to make evasive manoeuvres to avoid a huge boulder she is pulled a little lower.

Deepnight Revelation begins at an Orbital Value (OV) of 100. If her orbital value reaches 50 she hits the upper atmosphere and begins to take 1D Hull points of damage per round. If it reaches zero, she enters the thicker layers of the atmosphere and suffers 1Dx10 Hull points per round. If OV reaches –100 *Deepnight Revelation* strikes the ground with high enough velocity to destroy her completely.

Deepnight Revelation is subject to a telekinetic pull with a Thrust equivalent of six. Each round her pilot must make an Average (8+) Pilot check with a positive DM equal to the Thrust applied to resist the pull and a negative DM-6 to represent the strength (Thrust) of the telekinetic pull. *Deepnight Revelation's* nominal Thrust is four but her drives may be reduced in capacity. Orbital Value (OV) is increased or decreased by the Effect of the check.

If the ship is in the upper atmosphere DM-2 applies and if she is in the lower atmosphere DM-4 applies.

Every round, the entity can hurl a projectile at *Deepnight Revelation*. This costs it 1D points of its telekinetic 'Thrust' that round, which may allow the ship to suddenly gain altitude. The Travellers might think they are getting away, only to realise they have multiple mountain-tops headed towards them. A projectile takes D3 rounds to arrive, so it is quite possible that more than one will converge at the same time.

A projectile does 2Dx10 times the amount of telekinetic pull expended on launching it, so a rock that took 'Thrust' 5 of pull to hurl does 2Dx50 Hull points of damage. Rocks will automatically hit unless the pilot dodges them, which can be done by making a Difficult (10+) Pilot check (DEX) with a positive DM equal to the amount of Thrust applied – of course, Thrust applied to dodging cannot be used to maintain altitude. Multiple projectiles must be dodged separately. The entity will drag *Deepnight Revelation* out of orbit before long or smash her apart with boulders. The telekinetic pull can be applied anywhere within the gravitic shell – there is no escape.

It will be apparent at this point that the entity has probably committed suicide in its rage. It needed a thriving ecosystem to support it and it has just wrecked

the only one available. However, it will survive and regrow when the world's life reasserts itself, so just leaving it to die is not a viable option even if it is possible.

The situation is simple and bleak. *Deepnight Revelation* is locked in a death struggle with the Deepnight Entity. If the Travellers cannot kill the entity, it will probably survive and return to threaten all life in the galaxy. It will certainly destroy them as it has just wiped out an entire sentient species.

As at Kroylos, the spinal particle accelerator will not be effective and the fusion gun strafing option is not viable against such a dispersed entity. Demolition charges are not enough. It would be possible to kill the entity by sending an asteroid plunging into the planet at high enough velocity but there are none inside the gravitic shell.

Indeed, the only suitable projectile is *Deepnight Revelation* herself.

DESPERATE MEASURES

Deepnight Revelation's drive can be rigged to produce a tremendous burst of power; enough to lunge free of the entity's pull for a time. This will cause severe damage, reducing maximum Thrust by –1 until repaired but there is no alternative. However, the ship has nowhere to go even if she gets clear of the planet. Jumping through the intact gravitic shell is not possible.

There are few possible courses of action. The most direct is to set a slingshot course around one of the singularities, coming back towards Terminus at relativistic speed. *Deepnight Revelation* would hit the planet hard enough to vaporise a good portion of it; nothing could survive such an impact. A small craft would not have the mass to make this work and in any case a vessel without the gravitic shield device could not survive the slingshot. If *Deepnight Revelation* cannot escape she can end the threat here and now.

This would be a truly heroic ending to the campaign and the Travellers might actually choose to do it. However, there is an alternative. The Travellers may recall their gravitic protection device disrupted balance of forces between the singularities during their initial transit. Now, with the entity distracted by rage and hunger, the shell is even more unstable. A slingshot manoeuvre with the gravitic protection device active will destabilise the shell, causing it to collapse.

This manoeuvre does not have to place *Deepnight Revelation* on a collision course with the planet but any other course – other than directly into the star – will result in entering the collapsing gravitic shell at relativistic velocity. The chances of making a successful transit are infinitesimally small and *Deepnight Revelation* will suffer damage in the same manner as her entry – only worse – even if she succeeds. If the Referee wants an alternative ending to the campaign he may allow the transit to succeed, after which whatever is left of the ship can try to stagger home. The time dilation effect means that *Deepnight Revelation* has taken a one-way trip into the future. How much time has passed will not be at first apparent (Referees familiar with the extended Traveller universes might like to make this a matter of decades or centuries, placing the Travellers in a completely different era, albeit far from Charted Space).

In all probability, *Deepnight Revelation* will be in a condition where she cannot survive a second transit even if a course could be plotted. The Referee may wish to warn the Travellers of this when they try to plot an escape transit. Whether the Travellers are trying to escape through the shell or use their ship as a projectile, the outcome is the same: as *Deepnight Revelation* makes her slingshot manoeuvre, the gravitic shell begins to collapse.

Singularities spin out of position, falling inwards towards the natural barycentre of their gravitational forces. They will meet at the star in the centre of the shell and annihilate everything for light years in a catastrophic explosion of energies. Whether *Deepnight Revelation* hits the planet or not, everything within the gravitic shell – including the Deepnight Entity – is doomed.

The Travellers can die with glad hearts and clear minds, knowing they are about to eradicate their enemy then cause an explosion that might be detected as far away as Charted Space. It is a fitting end but, ironically, *Deepnight Revelation* herself has become irrelevant to the process of destruction. If she somehow escaped, the shell would still collapse and the entity would be destroyed… and there *is* a chance to survive.

The gravitic shell is already ragged and uneven, and the gravitic shield device might reduce the effects of the singularities on the jump drive. Engaging it is an insane risk but there is nothing whatsoever to lose by trying. A course is largely irrelevant; *Deepnight Revelation* is going to misjump no matter what – it is just a question of whether she survives.

If the Travellers do not jump, they die a heroes' death. If they do…

C H A P T E R T W E L V E

BEYOND EVERYTHING

Entry into jumpspace is horrific. The ship groans and twists, suffering yet more damage, and the crew experience a distorted sense of reality. No one can say how long the torment lasts. A moment, a century, a lifetime? Some of the crew will swear they saw the singularities start to collide. The cascading outpouring of energy destroyed others, until the whole gravitic shell was a howling chaos of energy and matter, and at its black heart the Deepnight Entity screamed into the void as it knew fear for the second and final time in its existence.

Did the entity send these images of its death to the Travellers? Were they merely hallucinations? Or did the universe show them what they had done? Were they right to do it? The Deepnight Entity was nothing more or less than the perfection of life and sought nothing more than all life does. Is the universe better or worse without it?

Clarity slowly returns as the Travellers pick themselves up off the deck. The emergency flare shields are closed across the bridge viewports. The damage board is an ominous mix of red for serious damage and black for no data. The ship is on emergency power and the ventilation system is working. Internal gravity is functional. Navigational sensors are coming back online. Data floods in as the system reboots, lights coming back on, power plants restarting.

Deepnight Revelation is alive. But where is she?

The navigational console begins to scroll, soullessly displaying available data.

Location: Unknown
Nearby Bodies: K7 V Star, designation unknown. Planetary bodies detected.

Navigational Reference Points
Close: All close bodies unknown
Local: No known bodies within an 8-parsec radius
Sector: No known bodies within a 20-parsec radius
Distant: No known bodies within a 100-parsec radius

Positional Estimate: Near Fringe, Nubecular Major
Distance to Home Port (Giikur Naval Base): Estimated 160,000ly

As the Travellers realise Nubecular Major is another name for the Large Magellanic Cloud, an entirely different galaxy from their own, the flare shields start to slide open. The light of a new sun shines into the bridge of *Deepnight Revelation* as the Travellers gaze down upon the distant Milky Way galaxy.

WHAT NOW?

The Travellers' voyage of discovery has taken them further than they could have imagined. They are on the edge of a wholly unexplored galaxy. *Deepnight Revelation* may not be in very good condition but she is a tough old ship. Will the Travellers begin exploring this new galaxy? Will they seek a way home? Either way, their adventures are just beginning.

TRAVELLER
TERMINUS POINT

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